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Buddhism in the Economic History of China: Land, Taxes and Monasteries

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BUDDHISM IN THE ECONOMIC HISTORY OF CHINA

BUDDHISM IN THE ECONOMIC HISTORY OF CHINA:
LAND, TAXES AND MONASTERIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the economic aspects of Buddhist monasteries in Chinese history in chronological order. The focus is on the problems related to land and taxes, which were crucial factors for the economic situation of monasteries and sensitive issues in the governing of every dynasty.

By looking into the interaction among Buddhist monasteries, state/local government, great families and elites regarding land estates and tax policies in different time periods, the study reveals that despite the lasting criticisms that Buddhist monasteries were harmful to the economic wellbeing of society and effected the revenue of the state, monasteries in fact actively engaged in economic activities, and could be utilized by the state as a tool to centralize wealth from society, contributing to the state economy in its own way.

The role of Buddhist monasteries was largely decided by their subject position in front of the state. The study shows that the prosperity of monastic economy was of different levels under the different social and political environment in each dynasty, but even in its most prosperous time, the scale of monasteries could be easily reduced by the state and their resources could be appropriated by government when it was considered necessary. Besides, the study also depicts the process of Buddhist monasteries gradually becoming taxed by the state, showing the general tendency that the Buddhist monastic economy was in the process of becoming more incorporated into or controlled by the state across time.

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ABBREVIATIONS

SKQS: *Yingyin Wenyuange siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書, Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1986, 1500 vols.

[Full citations from SKQS are given in the following fashion: title of the work; author; SKQS; SKQS volume number; fascicle number; title of specific essay/poem; page number. E.g. *Songyin wenji* 松隱文集 (Collection of Songyin), Cao Xun 曹勛 (1098-1174 CE), SKQS 1129, fas.30, "Continued Notes for Arhats in Mount Jing" 徑山續羅漢記, p.506]

T: *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 Edited by Takakasu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 et.al.Tōkyō: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924-1932. 100 vols.

XZJ: *Xuzang jing* 續藏經 Continued [Buddhist] Canon, Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1968-1978. 150 vols. Reprint of Dai Nihon Zokuzōkyō 大日本續藏經. Kyōto: Zōkyō Shoin, 1905-1912.

[Full citations from *Taishō* are given in the following fashion: title and fascicle number (where relavant); T; *Taishō* volume number; text number, page, register (a, b or c), and line number(s). E.g. *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (Enlarged Collection For Promoting and Clarifying [Buddhism]), vol.24, T52.2103.272b13-24.]

INTRODUCTION

In December 2009, the media exposure of a contract related to the property of Shaolin Temple (少林寺) produced a sensational impact upon the public.[1] The news stated that Shaolin Temple had been "sold" to Hong Kong China Tourism Company (香港中國旅遊公司), and the temple would be listed as IPO (initial public offering). This scandal again brought criticism on Shaolin Temple and its current abbot Shi Yongxin (釋永信), who had already been criticized by the public in recent years because he managed Shaolin Temple like a modern company. The criticisms generally fell into two lines: first, Buddhist sites should be places of purity and serenity, thus this close association between Shaolin Temple and business activities indicated the decline of Buddhism, and moreover, the decline of morality of Chinese society as a whole; second, the property and cultural property of Shaolin Temple belong to the whole country, thus the local government of Dengfeng did not have the right to "sell" it to a tourism company as its own property. While news and review articles tried to attract readers by emphasizing "Shaolin Temple" in those business-related affairs to produce a dramatic effect, the more complicated interest groups centered around Shaolin Temple—the local government who wanted to increase local GDP through the tourism industry, the local people who were fed by tourists and martial arts students, the companies who want to gain a profit from the

[1] See http://finance.sina.com.cn/stock/hkstock/ggIPO/20091216/13237111999.shtml, retrieved July 9th. More information related to the business activities of Shaolin Temple can be found at http://www.shaolin.org.cn/templates/T_new_list/index.aspx?nodeid=142, and http://www.shaolin.org.cn/templates/T_new_list/index.aspx?nodeid=143, retrieved July 9th, 2011.

prosperity of tourism— have often been overlooked. In fact, all of them exerted considerable influence upon Shaolin Temple's choice of its development path.

This current economy-related issue involving Buddhism is certainly tinted with characteristics of our own era, but certain issues regarding Buddhism and economy were in fact repeated again and again in the history of China, and some continuity may still be seen even now. While people today usually tend to see such cases as that of Shaolin Temple as new phenomena of contemporary society, if we become more familiar with the history of monastic economy, we would be able to detect its precedents from pre-modern times. Through the examination of what happened in history regarding monasteries' involvement in economic issues, we can better understand what is happening now, and realize that it is not something which could be solely attributed to today's "corrupt society" or a "CEO abbot". In historical materials, we already see monks conducting large-scale overseas trading in the Song dynasty, and also the local government's selling of temple estates to make up governmental deficit in the Ming dynasty.

Similar to the case of Shaolin Temple, most of the economic issues revolving around monasteries throughout history were caused by monastic properties, among which the most prominent are land estates. The existence of a monastery cannot be separated from its landed estates and the buildings on the land. These properties not only provided monastics with a place to live and carry out their practices, but also provide the means of making a life. Compared to the more unpredictable donations, the income from the land properties has always been the most stable and important economic resources to support a monastery. Buddhist monasteries have the capability of accumulating land and wealth,

and the economic resources thus accumulated in monasteries were always coveted by other interest groups. Surrounding those economic resources, we see the play of powers among the state government, local government, local elites and monasteries.

In this thesis I will examine the Buddhist monastic economy in Chinese history, with specific reference to the issues of land ownership in different dynasties. Since landed estates are the foundation for the existence of a monastery, how Buddhist monastics obtained their land estates, how they made use of them, and how they protected them were of central importance in their economic life. Related to land was the issue of taxes. Monastic lands usually enjoyed some exemption from taxes and/or labour duties, but such privileges were not as solid as some might think. In different periods and places, tax privileges differed, and there was also the case when monasteries were imposed with more tax burdens than normal households. Tax policy, as we will see, exerted considerable influences upon monastic economy in history.

This thesis is basically a chronological survey, covering almost one thousand and five hundred years, including Southern and Northern Dynasties, Sui, Tang, Song and Ming dynasties. Such a large span over time periods is because of my intention to gain a big picture of the situation of Buddhist monastic economy in Chinese history, though many details on the picture will necessarily remained blurred. The establishment of a new dynasty is never a sudden cut-off from the previous one. Both the continuity and changes between them are important for our understanding of their characteristics. In the case of Buddhist monastic economy, only through the comparison between different dynasties can we know how the relationship between state and Buddhist monasteries changed and

why it has changed. I want my thesis to serve as a picture from which we can see the vicissitude of Buddhist monasteries in Chinese history with its ups and lows, and to understand why Buddhist monasteries were prosperous in some dynasties, and why they declined in others. To do this, I put emphasis on the interaction among monasteries, the state, and local powers in different dynasties regarding the most important economic resources of lands, taxes and/or manpower. We could study the monastic economy more from within monasteries: looking into the income of the monastery, examining what was the living expense for a monastic, how donations were used, and how a monastery was internally organized to manage its wealth. But I choose to focus my attention more outside the walls of the monasteries, especially the influences from the contemporary state and other powerful social forces which considerably affected the economic conditions of the monasteries. Compare with the micro-study of the internal economic institution of monasteries, I think it is from this interaction on a more macro level that both the vitality of Buddhism and the characteristics of its contemporary state and society can be seen.

In each dynasty, Buddhist monasteries were taken into consideration by the state in their economic policies. Regarding the economic effects of Buddhist monasteries, people usually think of it in a negative way, considering the existence of monastics and monasteries as a financial burden to Chinese society in history, which caused problems to the economic wellbeing of the state. And it is easy to fall into the line that this economic burden was the price the state paid in exchange of the ideological benefits from the religion. However, through a closer examination, my thesis also attempts to show that

even from a purely economic point of view, Buddhist monasteries were not always that negative. Unlike in medieval Europe where Christianity was able to enjoy an authority over worldly powers to some degree, Buddhism in Chinese history was never able to acquire a status enabling monasteries to speak with a voice on the same level as the state, no matter whether it was during the time of disunity, or the dynasty of a centralized state. Because of their subject position to the state in Chinese history, the land and wealth accumulated in Buddhist monasteries were always ready to be utilized by the state or local government, making them a convenient tool to channel economic resources from society to the state. Different dynasties adopted different ways to regulate the economic behaviors of Buddhist monasteries under their contemporary political and social environment, and if the balancing point is properly located, the economic prosperity of the state and of Buddhist monasteries could co-exist well.

In my thesis, I leave out Yuan and Qing dynasties because during these two dynasties when China was ruled by minority people, different traditions of Buddhism—that of Tibet, Mongolia and Manchuria—also took a very active role, which makes the situation too complicated to be depicted in this thesis. Thus I chose only to write the dynasties when Chinese Buddhism was in the dominant position. Also due to the limit of the thesis, I am not presenting every facet of monastic economy in each dynasty, but only the most prominent aspects of it in different periods, which could reflect the major characteristics of the era it located within.

CHAPTER I

The First Spread of Buddhism: Between the State and Great Families

The period between the Eastern Han dynasty (東漢, 25BCE-220CE) and the reunification of China at the end of the sixth century witnessed the arrival and rapid expansion of Buddhism. This foreign religion arrived in China with merchants from Central Asia in the Eastern Han dynasty. In the following centuries of wars and upheaval, it grew with rapid speed, gaining the support of people from all levels of society, whether for its religious doctrines, philosophies or magical powers.

One of the most prominent features of the development of Buddhism was the increasing number of monasteries and monastics, which in the fifth century could already be seen everywhere in both the South and the North.[2] With the sponsorship from warlords or the state, Buddhist temples were built with luxury decorations, and monastics were exempted from taxes and corvée labour which were required for every registered commoner even since the first recorded construction of a Buddhist temple — which we will discuss later. Such conditions soon attracted criticism in which the development of

[2] See the statistics gathered by Jacques Gernet in *Buddhism in Chinese Society: An Economic History from the Fifth to Tenth Century*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, p.6: In 316, the recorded number of Buddhist monasteries was 182. It rose to more than eight thousand at the beginning of the sixth century; and 30,000 to 40,000 in the middle of sixth century.

Buddhist monasteries was considered as a waste of the state's economic resources.[3] Based upon those criticisms, modern scholars also took similar viewpoints. For example, in his monumental work on Buddhism and the economic history of China, Jacques Gernet stated that "the monastic community, maintained by the faithful and by the state, was no doubt a constant burden for the Chinese economy… The existence of this monastic community posed above all a fiscal problem for China, both with respect to the number of religious who were maintained at state expense and to the size of the fictitious monastic community consisting of laymen who profited illicitly from the fiscal privileges of the regular clergy."[4] Although it is true that large number of tax-exempt monastics as well as laymen taking advantages of the monastics' tax-exemption privilege would directly reduce the state revenue, a more careful look into the social conditions during this time shows that the picture is in fact more complicated than statement such as Gernet's. In this chapter, I want to show that during the disunited period when the power wrestling between the state and local great families were the most severe, the spread of Buddhist monasteries and their attracting of wealth form society in reality assisted the state in its contention against great families.

During the several centuries of upheaval following the end of Eastern Han dynasty, the taxes and required corvée labour that peasants had to bear were in a continuous process of

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[3] Gernet presented and discussed those criticism in *Buddhism in Chinese Society: An Economic History from the Fifth to Tenth Century*. pp.15-17; also see Silk, Jonathan A. "Marginal Notes on a Study of Buddhism, Economy and Society in China", *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 1999, 22 (2): pp. 359-96.

[4] Gernet, 1995, p.15.

becoming heavier and more unregulated.[5] Both in the South and North, frequent changes of dynasties and lasting wars repeatedly destroyed the palaces, cities and their defensive works, which required repeated reconstructions. But on the other hand, the population was decreasing due to warfare. Many survival-level peasants sought for protection of great families by becoming their dependents, working on their estates which were defended by private defensive works (the statistics of the population are given below). The provision and needs of taxes and services were extraordinarily unbalanced, thus peasants who still managed to live as an independently-registered household, had to provide even more taxes and labour services. No wonder then that such condition again motivated the remaining peasants to seek for any opportunity that might enable them to escape from such burdens, resulting in a vicious circle that continued through the period of disunion. The most extreme practice happened in the fifth century, when some peasants disfigured themselves in order to be exempted from corvée labour.[6] And due to the

[5] For a discussion of the tax and corvée labour conditions during this period time, see Fu Zhuju 傅築夫, *Social and Economic History of the Two Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties* 兩晉南北朝社會經濟史, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1986, pp.106-126.
[6] *Nanqi shu* 南齊書 (Book of Southern Qi), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972, vol.40, p.696: "[in 487] for people in the eastern prefectures, [taxes and corvée labour] have no limit…people in fear of missing the strict deadline for [taxes and corvée labour] disfigured their own body. There are people who chop their hands and feet in order to escape from corvée labour, and the propagation of people could not increase. This at last became a common condition." (東郡使民, 年無常限……應充猥役，必由窮困，乃有畏失嚴期，自殘軀命，亦有斷絕手足，以避徭役，生育弗起，殆為恒事), vol. 41, p.731: "The requirement for corvée labour was constant; [peasants] could only become exhausted…those who took risks escape into mountains and lakes, those who suffered [buried] themselves in ditches. There were also people who chop off their arms and cut off their hands to make themselves disfigured, and who sold their servants and sons to resolve the urgent problem…" (竊見湧民之困，困實極矣，役命有常，只應轉竭，蹙迫驅催，莫安其所。險者或竄逃山湖，困者自經溝瀆爾。亦有摧臂斮手，苟自殘落，

frequent happenings of such self-handicap, there were even edicts issued to recruit these people as metal workers, thus attempting to stop peasants from escaping taxes and services in this way.[7]

For most peasants, the better method to avoid the heavy burden was to become dependents of local great clans where state taxes and services could be exempted. Those great families also needed dependents for agricultural work on their large estates as well as defensive forces in this time of upheaval. The gap between the registered population during the Southern and Northern dynasties in historical records and the estimation of the total population by modern scholars might give us an impression of how serious was the problem of hidden population[8]. It is estimated that the total population of China reached its lowest point in the first half of the third century, which was between 22.24 million to 23.61 million, 60% less than the population peak (60 million) in Eastern Han.[9] At the end of Southern Chen dynasty (南陳, 557-589 CE), when the Chen emperor surrendered to Sui (隋, 581-618 CE), the registered population of the South was only 2 million, while the estimated total population by modern scholars is around 15 million.[10] At the end of Northern Zhou dynasty (北周, 557-581 CE), its registered population was recorded to be

販傭貼子，權赴急難。)

[7] *Song shu* 宋書 (Book of Song), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974, vol.3, p.55: "[in 483] Again an edict was made: 'If there are people who disfigured themselves, make them metal workers.' Such condition was indeed due to the hardness of politics and punishment which made people unable to make a life." (又制: 有無故自殘傷者，補冶士。實由政刑煩苛, 民不堪命。)

[8] The modern estimate took into consideration of calculated increase rates minus the effects of warfare.

[9] For the detailed statistics and discussion, see Ge Jianxiong 葛劍雄, *The History of Chinese Population* 中國人口史, Shanghai: Fudan University, 2002. Vol. 1, p.448.

[10] Ibid, p.470.

9,009,640 in year 580,[11] while the modern estimate of the total population of the North by then is around 30 million.[12]

The practice of peasants becoming dependents of great families to escape taxes and corvée labour, one of the major possible causes of the population gap, though illegitimate, became increasingly common even since the end of Eastern Han, and the later state governments had to accept this fact gradually. In the state of Cao Wei (曹魏, 220-265 CE), it was recognized by law that people of higher classes could possess a number of "dependents who rent oxen" (租牛客戶, peasants who rented oxen from rich families to work in the field). It is unclear what was the exact number allowed by law, but some evidence suggests that in reality, powerful families could have hundreds of dependents for agricultural labour during this time, and these dependents were exempted from the state taxes and corvée.[13] The Western Jin state (西晉, 265-316 CE) , immediately after it united the Three Kingdoms, issued an edict that people holding official ranks, as well as their relatives and dependents could all enjoy exemption from state taxes and services (while in the Han dynasty, theoretically everyone, including high officials, was required to provide labour or military service). Officials of the highest two ranks could possess no more than

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[11] *Tong dian* 通典 (Comprehensive Records [a political encyclopedia compiled by Du You 杜佑 in 801]), Beijing: Zhonghuashuju ,1988. Vol 7, "Prosperity and Decline of the Population in History" 歷代盛衰戶口, p.147.

[12] Ge Jianxiong, *The History of Chinese Population*, p.475.

[13] *Jin shu* 晉書 (Book of Jin), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974, vol. 93, p.2412: "Wei (that is, Cao Cao 曹操) granted 'oxen-renting dependents' to high officials from dukes downwards; the number was different based upon official levels. From then on many despicable people in fear of corvée labours were happy to become [such dependents], and in powerful families there were often hundreds [of such dependents]. (魏氏給公卿已下租牛客戶數各有差,自後小人憚役，多樂為之，貴勢之門動有百數。)

fifty dependent households (客戶), the third rank ten households, the fourth rank seven households, and so on.[14] This edict indicated the state acceptance of this already common practice, and also its attempt to limit the number of households belonging to powerful families.

However, besides becoming a dependent of a great family, the expansion of Buddhism, especially after the fifth century, provided peasants with another choice of escaping taxes and services. Even in the first detailed record of the construction of a Buddhist temple by a local official Ze Rong (笮融 ?-195CE) around 193 CE in South China, the Buddhist followers' exemption from corvée labour is already mentioned: "(Ze Rong) ordered the Buddhist devotees from the region (under his supervision) and from the adjacent prefectures to listen and to accept the doctrine. *(Those people) he exempted from the other statute corvée labour in order to attract them*. Those who on account of this from near and afar came to (the monastery) numbered more than five thousand. Whenever there was (the ceremony of) "bathing the Buddha", he had always great quantities of wine and food set out (for distribution), and mats were spread along the roads over a distance of several tens of li. (On these occasions) some ten thousand people came to enjoy the spectacle and the food. The expenses (of such a ceremony) amounted to many millions (of cash)."[15]

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[14] *Jin shu* 晉書(Book of Jin), vol.26, pp.790-791.

[15] Translated by Zücher, Erik, *Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*, Leiden: Brill, 1959(2007), p.28. Original Chinese text is in *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Records of Three Kingdom), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 1971, vol 49, p.1185: "乃大起浮圖祠,以銅為人，黃金吐身，衣以錦彩，垂銅九重，下為重樓閣道，可容三千餘人，悉課讀佛經，令界內及旁郡人有好佛者聽受道，復

This practice of exempting monastics' labour services as initiated by Ze Rong, though with variations, was largely adopted by states in the following periods. Peasants, seeking any opportunity to escape the burden of heavy tax and labour services, soon started to take refuge in Buddhist monasteries. Especially in the North, the number of monastics rose to an astonishing two million in the latter half of the sixth century during Northern Wei dynasty.[16] As we mentioned above, such a speedy expansion of Buddhist institutions and personnel soon attracted attention and complaints. As the composer of "Records of Buddhism and Taoism" in *Book of Wei*, pointed out: "Thus registered commoners enter the faith together. [They] pretend to be admiring śramaṇas, but in reality aimed at escaping from corvée labour. This is extremely deceptive and excessive."[17]

However, if we note that a major cause of the state's loss of registered population was the great clans, then the picture of Buddhist monasteries existing as a black hole into which taxable households disappeared from state control is too simplistic. And, while through the monastic bureaucratic system the number of Buddhist monastics and dependents was able to be known and controlled by the state as a whole, the total number of dependents hidden in great families was quite difficult for the state to know, let alone to lay a hand on. In this light, the economic threat the state government felt to be more intensive should be from great families, instead of Buddhist monasteries.

其他役以招致之，由此遠近前後至者五千餘人戶。每浴佛，多設酒飯，布席于路，徑數十裡，民人來觀及就食且萬人，費以巨億計。"

[16] *Wei shu* 魏書 (Book of Wei), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974, vol.114, "Records of Buddhism and Taoism" 釋老志, p.3048. And note that even if Buddhist monastics amounted to 3 million, compared to the estimated population gap mentioned above, they still did not occupy the major proportion of the hidden population.

[17] Ibid, p.3048: "於是所在編民，相與入道，假慕沙門，實避調役，偽濫之極。"

The annexation of arable land by the great families was a huge problem to the state ever since Han dynasty. By the time of Eastern Han, private ownership of land had become a very well-accepted notion in society, as can be often seen in historical materials recording the buying and sale of land by people from the imperial family to lower classes.[18] With the increasing annexation of land, more records of large private landed estates called *Zhuangyuan* (莊園) can be detected in historical materials. There is evidence to show that some of those landed estates developed into self-sustaining economic units that contained activities of farming, forestry, pasture, fishing as well as handicraft workshops by Eastern Han dynasty. Irrigation projects were built in those estates, and landlords also engaged in financial activities of loaning based upon the large income derived from the management of the landed estate.[19] Those large estates gradually developed to include private defensive works during periods of political instability that existed since the end of Eastern Han. Especially in Northern China, where there were more wars than in the South, such defense works of fortified walls and castles (塢壁, 塢堡) became a common sight on the landscape throughout the time of Sixteen Kingdoms (十六國, 304-439 CE) and Northern dynasties (439-581 CE). Large number of peasants seeking protection from wars and exemption from taxes and corvée labour were absorbed into these estates, working on farms as tenant peasants and/or serving as private soldiers

[18] Zhu Shaohou 朱紹侯, *Land Institutions and Relationship among Classes in Qin and Han Dynasties* 秦漢土地制度與階級關係, Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1985. pp.29-31.

[19] For a more detailed study on the development of great landlords' estates in Eastern Han dynasty, see Zhu Shaohou, 1985, pp.90-110.

when required.[20] These large landlords played central roles in the changing of dynasties, occupying key positions at court and even making their own bids for the throne. For example, the founder of Former Liang (前涼, 301-376 CE), one of the states during the time of Sixteen Kingdoms, was from the powerful Zhang family of Anding (安定張氏), and the founder of Western Liang (西涼, 400-422 CE) belonged to the powerful Li family of Longxi (隴西李氏).[21]

Emperors during the Southern and Northern dynasties knew that in order to maintain the stability of the state, they had to make use of the power of the great clans, while simultaneously limiting their economic and political expansion. The longest dynasty with the largest territory in North China during this disunited period, Northern Wei 北魏 (386-557 CE), worked hard to keep the relationship between the state and the great families in balance. At the beginning of Northern Wei, the previous "rural neighborhood unions" (鄉里組織) in charge of local administration tasks were largely destroyed due to frequent wars. The newly-established state had to rely on local great families to collect taxes, regulate and supervise labour and military services, accepting their de facto control of local households. This policy was called "Supervision and Protection by Local Leaders"

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[20] For a more detailed introduction of the origin, development and economic situation of "fortified castles" (塢壁), see Ju Shengji 具聖姬, *Fortified Castles in Two Han, Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties* 兩漢魏晉南北朝的塢壁, Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2004.

[21] See Peng Fengwen 彭豐文 "The Rising Up of the Powerful Clans of Helong and Their Influence on the Development of Northwest Borderlands during the Period of Han, Wei and Sixteen Kingdoms" 漢魏十六國時期河隴大族勢力的崛起及其在西北邊疆開發中的作用, in *China's Borderland History and Geography Studies* 中國邊疆史地研究, vol. 13, issue 4, 2003(12), p.11.

(宗主督護制)[22]. Under this policy, the great families were a convenient place in which to hide dependents from being registered as state taxable population. As is recorded in *Comprehensive Records* (通典, a political encyclopedia compiled by Du You 杜佑 in 801), the results of this policy were that "many people were hidden or substituted; fifty or thirty households [were registered] as one household, which was called dependence. The dependents had no governmental corvée labour."[23]

Such a situation surely presented a large problem for the state in great need of taxes and labour services. The *Wei History* (魏書) recorded the court debate over the establishment of a new policy called "Three Administrators System" (三長制) to replace the previous method of "Supervision and Protection by Local Leaders" in 486, when state power became stronger than before. The proposal of this new policy, submitted by Li Chong (李沖, 450-498 CE), encountered severe opposition. Among the court officials recorded to have strongly opposed the new policy, the Secretary General Zheng Xi (中書令 鄭羲) was from a first-rank family in Xingyang (滎陽), the Secretary Head Gao You (秘書令 高祐) was from the great clan in Bohai (渤海), and the Grand Commandant Yuan Pi (太尉 元丕) was from an aristocratic family.[24] They can be considered as

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[22] For more detailed information on 宗主督護制, see Gao Ming 高敏, "Tentative Investigation on the Timeline of the Implementation of 'Supervision and Protection by Local Leaders Policy' in Northern Wei and Discussion on the Social Influence of this Policy"北魏宗主督護制始行時間試探——兼論"宗主督護"制的社會影響, *Academic Journal of Guangzhou University* 廣州大學學報, 2002(01), pp.1-8.

[23] *Tong dian* 通典, vol.3, p.61: "後魏初不立三長，唯立宗主督護，所以人多隱冒，五十、三十家方為一戶，謂之蔭附。蔭附者皆無官役，豪強征斂，倍於公賦矣。"

[24] Zhu Shaohou 朱紹侯, *The Land Institutions and the Relation among Classes in Wei,*

representatives of the major landlords' interests. The policy was only able to be carried out due to the insistence of the Empress Dowager Feng (馮太后, 442-490 CE). In this policy, the government appointed administrators of the three local levels—neighborhood (鄰, five households), *li* (裡, five neighborhoods) and *dang* (黨, five *li*)—to replace local leaders from great families to collect taxes and supervise labour services. In this way, the taxes and population could be more directly controlled by the state. Almost at the same time, an "Equal Land Distribution Policy" (均田制) was introduced by the state, aiming at attenuating land annexation by granting a certain amount of land to every peasant. The effect of these new policies can be attested by the fact that the increase of registered population largely exceeded the natural increase rate and by the frequent establishment of new towns and prefectures.[25] These meant that the state was regaining tax revenue and labour from the hands of the great families.

The expansion of Buddhism in the north during the fifth and sixth century thus occurred in the context of the tension between state government and the great families regarding land and tax-related problems. Northern Wei was a dynasty well-known for its state sponsorship of Buddhism, with the exception of an incident during the time of Emperor

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Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties 魏晉南北朝土地制度與階級關係, Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1988, p.143.

[25] For a more detailed introduction of 三長制 and its effects, see Hou Xudong 侯旭東, "Four Problems of 'Three Administrators System' in Northern Dynasty" 北朝'三長制'四題", in *Studies on Chinese History* 中國史研究, 2002(04), pp.33-47; and Zhou Yiliang 週一良, "To See the Influences of Three Administrators System from the Changes in the Population of Northern Wei Prefectures" 從北魏幾郡的戶口變化看三長制的作用", in *Continued Collection of Essays on the History of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties* 魏晉南北朝史論集續編, Beijing: Beijing University, 1991, pp.52-66.

Taiwu (太武帝, 408-452 CE), who issued an edict ordering the killing Buddhist monastics and destruction of temples in 446. But the effect of his edict was largely counteracted by his crown prince, who postponed the date to start the persecution, thus giving adequate time for monastics to hide themselves and to protect the properties of monasteries. Except for this incident, imperial sponsorship of Buddhism continued in Northern Wei, and Buddhism expanded quickly. According to the records of the monk Falin (法琳, 571-639 CE) which were also cited by Gernet, in Northern Wei there were 47 great state monasteries, 839 monasteries of princes, dukes and eminent families and 30,000 or more built by commoners, and the number of monastics at the end of Northern Wei rose to an astonishing 2,000,000.[26] Besides monastics, there were also "Buddha households" (佛圖戶) and monastic households (僧祇戶) that were dependents to Buddhist monasteries, who were also exempted from state taxes and corvée labour (this will be mentioned again later).

Large portions of those monastics and dependents, of course, were transformed from poor peasants attempting to escape state taxes and corvée labour. But the existence of Buddhist monasteries was certainly not the cause of peasants becoming monastics in order to escape corvée labour; instead, such a phenomenon was only a result of the heavy state taxes and corvée labour which peasants were already unable to bear. It is not that the peasants would just peacefully work on their land, pay taxes and complete their corvée labour as required if there was not the choice of becoming a Buddhist monastic. Many of

[26] *Bianzheng lun* 辨正論 (Treatises on Debating the Truth), vol. 3, T52.2110.507b26-c01; Gernet, 1995, p.4. Compare this to the number of 1,768 monasteries and 24,000 monastics at the end of Western Jin [265-316 CE].

these two million peasants might have been unable to survive because of the overloaded taxes and labour services, or they might have deliberately injured themselves to avoid taxes and corvée labour, or more rationally and probably, taken refuge in great local families. The existence of Buddhist monasteries was not harming the state by stealing the registered population; instead, it might have provided another choice for the desperate peasants to continue to work and survive. Based on some biographies of eminent monks, it seems that it was quite normal for novices to be sent to work on the fields, such as in the cases of Daoan (道安, 312-385 CE) and Faxian (法顯, 334-420 CE). Daoan was said to be put to work in the fields for three years because he was not highly regarded by his master at first, and only after his capabilities were showed that he was noted by the master and then got fully ordained and was allowed to travel and study.[27] This implies that it would be the norm for sending novices to do field work; if they did not show any special capability, such labour would take a long period. And it was the common non-talented novices that occupied the largest portion of the monastic community. Furthermore, Gernet also noted that the accounts of monasteries in Dunhuang also suggested that monks participated in agricultural labour.[28] These monastics working on the farm of the monasteries could not be simply regarded as parasites of society.

In Northern Wei society (and also in the South), Buddhist monasteries, supported by state government ideologically and economically, came to be the only comparable social force that was able to co-exist or even compete with great local families for economic and social resources. For an individual peasant, the question of whether to become attached to

[27] *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (Biographies of Eminent Monks), vol. 5, T50.2059.351c03-15.
[28] Gernet, 1995, p.96.

a monastery or to a great family did not seem to result in a big difference for their own economic situation. However, if we see things from the state's point of view, whether large number of peasants sought refuge in monasteries or in great families would bring a different result. Big families were a much more uncontrollable force for the state. Deeply rooted in their local regions, often armed with military works and having representatives in the court, they were hard to be directed by the state or to be incorporated into any state program trying to increase the state income and strengthen the central power. On the other hand, Buddhist monasteries, though also bifurcating the state tax income and labours, were comparably much easier for the state to lay its hands on. And in fact, with the establishment of the monastic bureaucratic system in Northern Wei, Buddhist monasteries were directly controlled by the state.

This monastic bureaucracy, installed in parallel with the secular governmental system, was part of the state framework. The highest office in this pyramidal bureaucratic structure was the Zhaoxuan Office (昭玄寺) in the capital, the head of which was the national Superintendent of Monastics (沙門統), who was appointed by the emperor and deeply involved in state affairs. He was assisted by several General Rectors (都維那), as well as other executive officials. They took charge of national monastic affairs. Monastic Superintendents and Rectors were also established in each province and prefecture, while at the town level, there seemed to be only Rectors. The lowest level in this bureaucratic system was in individual monasteries, where the "three cords" (三綱), —chief seat (上

座), abbot (寺主), and rector (維那)—, were in charge.[29] Through this system, the state was able to know the condition of Buddhist monasteries clearly. This might also explain why the problem of the increasing number of Buddhist monastics seemed to be so severe in official records: this is because the government had in hand the updated statistical information of Buddhist monasteries. To put it simply, they wrote about it because they knew it. But for the statistics of great families, —how many of them there were and how many households were hidden by them—, the state had no way of gaining that information on the national level.

Between 469 and 476, the national Superintendent of Monastics Tanyao (曇曜, active in mid-fifth century) suggested that the emperor establish "monastic households" (僧祇戶) and "Buddha households" (佛圖戶). "Buddha households" were composed of criminals made into serfs of monasteries. "Monastic households" were required to submit sixty *shi* (石, approx. 30kg[30]) of millet to monasteries and thus were no longer state registered, exempted from state taxes and corvée labour. Millet (millet was also used as cash during this period of time) submitted to and stored by the monasteries, as projected by Tanyao, could be used as disaster relief in years of low yield. The emperor approved this suggestion. The number of those households was not specified, but as recorded in *Book of Wei*, this new category of households soon pervaded every prefectures and

[29] For more detailed discussion of the monastic bureaucracy in Northern Wei, see Xie Chongguang 謝重光 and Bai Wengu 白文固, "Monastic Bureaucracy in the Northern Dynasties" 北朝的僧官制度, in *History of Chinese Monastic Bureaucracy* 中國僧官制度史, Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1990, pp. 49-84.
[30] See Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A Manual (Revised and Enlarged),* Cambridge & London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000, p.236 & p.238.

towns.[31]

Regarding the monasteries' taking on of the task of disaster relief, Gernet asked the question that "for what reason, however, was a public service (disaster relief), which should normally have come under the authority of secular officials, under these circumstances entrusted to the Church?"[32] But in reality, the Chinese monastic bureaucratic system as established by the state, was itself part of the state structure, instead of a comparably separate "Church". The central government supervised and directed it just as a department of the state government. Emperor Xiaowen (孝文帝) made a set of 47 monastic rules himself to regulate the increasing Buddhist communities in year 493.[33] Monastic officials were appointed by the state, and the highest level officials were directly appointed by the emperor.[34] Court members could impeach monastic officials[35], and in times of fiscal deficiency, the central government sold ranks of monastic officials to those who could submit a certain amount of millet to the state or regional storehouse, in the similar way as the governmental ranks were sold.[36]

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[31] See *Wei shu* 魏書, vol.114,"Records of Buddhism and Taoism" 釋老志, p.3037: "曇曜奏：平齊戶及諸民，有能歲輸穀六十斛入僧曹者，即為'僧祇戶'，粟為'僧祇粟'，至於儉歲，賑給饑民。又請民犯重罪及官奴以為'佛圖戶'，以供諸寺掃灑，歲兼營田輸粟。高宗並許之。於是僧祇戶、粟及寺戶，遍於州鎮矣。"

[32] Gernet, 1995, p.102.

[33] *Wei shu* 魏書, vol.114, "Records of Buddhism and Taoism," p.3039.

[34] *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (Enlarged Collection For Promoting and Clarifying [Buddhism]), vol.24, T52.2103.272b13-24, "Edict on Appointing Sengxian as the General Rector" 以僧顯為沙門都統詔: "……可敕令為沙門都統。又副儀貳事，緇素攸同，頃因曜統獨濟，遂廢斯任。今欲毗德贊善，固須其人。皇舅寺法師僧義……用膺副翼，可都維那，以光賢徒。"

[35] *Wei shu* 魏書, vol.114, "Records of Buddhism and Taoism" 釋老志, p.3042.

[36] *Wei shu* 魏書, vol.110, "Records of Food and Goods" 食貨志, p.2861.

Since Buddhist monasteries were considered as part of the state bureaucratic system, the lands and dependents owned by monasteries were not completely cut away from the state as those belonged to big local families. If a peasant was working on the estate of a big family as a dependent, the state had no access to any of his production; they just became the private property of the big family. But if a peasant was working for a monastery, just as in the case of monastic household (僧祇戶), though he also only submitted millet to the monastery and provided no tax or labour service to the state, the millet was stored in monasteries to be partly used for the well-being of the state through disaster relief. And it can be supposed that the millet and wealth preserved in the monastery storehouses in this way would be comparatively easy to be appropriated by the government when needed. In year 511, the state edict actually commanded that prefectural governors should supervise and inspect monastic millet stores. The prefecture Secretary in Chief should examine places where monastic millet was stored, and each prefecture should make a separate record of the original amount of the millet, the loaning and returning of the millet and the dates, the profits made, and the amount used for disaster relief.[37] Buddhist monasteries, instead of stealing taxable households from the state, should be more considered as channeling existing and potential dependents of the

[37] *Wei shu* 魏書, vol.114, "Records of Buddhism and Taoism" 釋老志, p.3041: "詔曰："僧祇之粟，本期濟施，儉年出貸，豐則收入。山林僧尼，隨以給施；民有窘弊，亦即賑之。但主司冒利，規取贏息，及其征責，不計水旱，或償利過本，或翻改券契，侵蠹貧下，莫知紀極。細民嗟毒，歲月滋深。非所以矜此窮乏，宗尚慈拯之本意也。自今已後，不得傳委維那、都尉，可令刺史共加監括。尚書檢諸有僧祇穀之處，州別列其元數，出入贏息，賑給多少，並貸償歲月，見在未收，上臺錄記。若收利過本，及翻改初券，依律免之，忽複征責。或有私債，轉施償僧，即以丐民，不聽收檢。後有出貸，先盡貧窮，征債之科，一準舊格。富有之家，不聽輒貸。脫仍冒濫，依法治罪。"

great families and their production into a new organization more transparent and connected to the state. The monastic bureaucratic system continued in later dynasties in the North; and Sui dynasty (581-618CE) also adopted it after it united China.

When the state did feel that too much wealth had been collected by Buddhist monasteries and too many people had been absorbed by them, it was not very difficult to resolve these problems using administrative tools. Monastics could be returned to lay status on a large scale just by a state edict. The wealth accumulated in Buddhist monasteries, unlike those of great families, was there to be handily confiscated by state and local government in time of fiscal deficiency. In year 538, the governor of Luoyang 洛陽 had the Buddhist statues there melted down to cast copper coins. This happened again later between 557 and 560 on a national level (and also later in Tang dynasty).[38] To some extent, Buddhist monasteries were like banks of the state, accumulating wealth when there was surplus in society, and when the state was in fiscal deficit, the wealth stored in monasteries all over the country could be easily seized by the state as a whole through confiscation, or even persecution.

In 577, eleven years before the Sui reunion of China, the first large-scale persecution of Buddhism occurred during the Northern Zhou dynasty, the regime ruling Northwest China after the Northern Wei dynasty and before the Sui dynasty. By that time, the rapid spread of Buddhism in North China under state support had successfully accumulated remarkable labour and economic resources in its system. If the millions of monastics and large amount of wealth could be manipulated together, it would no doubt tremendously

[38] Gernet, 1995, p.22.

increase the state's power.

Emperor Wu of Northern Zhou (周武帝, 543-578 CE) was an ambitious ruler planning to reunite China. At that time, Northeast China was still under the rule of Northern Qi (北齊), so the first stage of Emperor Wu's ambitious agenda was to occupy Northern Qi. Important for war are soldiers and economic resources. Coveting the manpower and wealth in Buddhist monasteries, Emperor Wu started to plan his persecution against Buddhism from the year 572. This was the year when he organized a court debate among Confucians, Taoists and Buddhists, by which he intended to make Buddhism as the inferior among the Three Teachings.[39]

Some Buddhists during the time had already detected the relationship between emperor's disdain for Buddhism and his preparation for the wars to come. A monk called Tanji (曇積, circa mid-six century) submitted an appeal to the emperor entitled "Remonstrance for the Emperor of Zhou Not to Eliminate Monastics" in which he straightforwardly pointed out that the emperor was covetous of the manpower and land accumulated in Buddhist monasteries and tried to persuade him not to act on those desires.[40] However, the Emperor had made up his mind. In 574, he issued the edict to abolish Buddhism and Taoism, and to return all monastics to secular life: thus they became taxable and had to take on military and corvée labour.[41]

With sufficient preparation beforehand, in 577, Emperor Wu of Zhou successfully

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[39] *Zhou shu* 周書 (Book of Zhou), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1971, vol.5, p.83.
[40] In *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集, vol.24, T52.2103.279b19 - 20: "若他方異國，遠近聞知，疑謂求兵於僧眾之間，取地於塔廟之下，深誠可怪。"
[41] *Zhou shu* 周書, vol.5, p.85: "斷佛、道二教，經像悉毀，罷沙門、道士，並令還民。並禁諸淫祀，禮典所不載者，盡除之。"

conquered Northern Qi and united North China. Northern Qi was a state where the popularity of Buddhism reached its highest peak in Chinese history. Northern Zhou continued with its persecution policy in the newly conquered area: forty thousand monasteries were destroyed, wealth confiscated, scriptures burned, and three million Buddhist monastics, which accounted for almost ten percent of the total population, were returned to registered households, becoming peasants and/or soldiers.[42] While Buddhists certainly strongly rebuked this persecution, some praised its positive effects on the military success and strengthened state power of Northern Zhou. Lu Sidao (盧思道, 531-582 CE), a renowned poet and writer during that time regarded it as a policy which strengthened the state and enriched the people.[43] Emperor Wu of Zhou himself concluded that due to the persecution, "people's [average] labour loads were lowered, state taxes increased every year and the army grew larger every day, [making it possible] to defeat Qi (齊, the state of Northern Qi) in the East and pacify the Rong (戎, a minority people live near the West border) in the West."[44]

Just as he was about to carry out his plan of reuniting the North and South, Emperor Wu died from illness in 578, and the throne was usurped by Yang Jian only three years

[42] *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶紀 (Records of the Three Jewels in Past Generations) vol.11, T49.2034.94b24- 28: "毀破前代關山西東數百年來官私所造一切佛塔，掃地悉盡。融刮聖容，焚燒經典。八州寺廟，出四十千，盡賜王公，充為第宅。三方釋子，滅三百萬，皆複軍民，還歸編戶。" *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集, vol.10, T52.2103.153c23-28: "現成寺廟,出四十千,並賜王公,充為第宅,五從釋門,減三百萬,皆複軍兵,還歸編戶.融擴佛像,焚燒佛經,三寶福財,簿錄入官,登即賞賜.分散落盡。"

[43] *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集, vol.7, T52.2103.133a29-b01: "帝獨運遠略罷之(佛教),強國富民之上策。"

[44] *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集 vol.10, T52.2103.154c18-20: "自廢佛以來,民役稍稀,租調年增,吾師日益,東平齊國,西定妖戎,國安民樂,豈非有益。"

later from the incompetent successor of Emperor Wu. Inheriting the legacy of Northern Zhou, among others the manpower and economic resources accumulated by Emperor Wu through the persecution of Buddhism, Yang Jian was able actually to reunite South and North China in 588 after almost four hundred years of disunion.[45]

With the destruction of monasteries and secularization of monastics, Emperor Wu's persecution resulted in the near extermination of Buddhist monasteries and monastics in the North.[46] We have mentioned in the last chapter the three-way relationship between the state, the Buddhist monasteries and the great powerful families. Now, with Buddhist manpower and property transferred to the state through the persecution, it turned out to be the right time to support Buddhism again and to attack those great powerful families.

The Sui state took the dominant position in its competition with the great families for taxable households. The Sui legal code made it clear that except for those who made great contributions to the state, all large households should be divided into smaller ones,[47] thus disassembling the power of large families by dissolving their collective resources. The regulation on household registration required that all dependents to great families returned to registered households.[48] To prevent these regulations from being empty words, the state significantly reduced the taxes and labour duties for peasants, making it no longer advantageous for people to become dependents of great families.[49] In addition, the

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[45] *Zhou shu* 周書, p.106 & p.136.
[46] See footnote no.41.
[47] *Sui shu* 隋書 (Book of Sui), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1973, vol.24, p.681: "Records of Foods and Goods" 食貨志: "大功以下，兼令析籍。"
[48] *Tong dian* 通典, vol.7, pp.156-157： "高熲設輕稅之法，浮客悉自歸於編戶。"
[49] *Tong dian* 通典, vol.7, p.156: "高熲睹流冗之病，建'輸籍之法'，於是定其名，輕其

Sui state established the new examination system to substitute the previous bloodline-based recommendation system (中正制) for the recruiting of officials, depriving the advantages great families had to be recruited as officials in the governmental system. A Tang dynasty literati Liu Yi (劉秩, ?-756 CE) made a comment regarding the establishment of this new system that "Sui abolished the Zhongzhong system, thus the recommending of officials was no longer based upon the hometown of people. As a result, there came to be no powerful families in neighborhoods."[50] This examination system, also called *keju* (科舉), was largely adopted by later dynasties for more than a thousand years in Chinese history.

The effect of these policies that were oriented towards attenuating the social and economic power of great families was reflected in the jump in the state-registered population. In 583 alone, 1.64 million dependents became newly state-registered,[51] and the registered population reached 46 million in year 606, which was the highest peak since the end of Western Han.[52] If it were not for the transfer of labour and economic resources through the persecution of Buddhism in the 570s which largely increased the

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數，使人知為'浮客'、被彊家收大半之賦；為編氓、奉公上蒙輕減之征。"

[50] *Tong dian* 通典, vol.17, p.417: "隋氏罷中正，舉選不本鄉曲，故里閭無豪族。"

[51] *Sui shu* 隋書, vol.24, "Records of Foods and Goods", p.681: "[In 583]大功已下，兼令析籍，各為戶頭，以防容隱。於是時計帳進四十四萬三千丁，新附一百六十四萬一千五百口。"

[52] *Tong dian* 通典, vol.7, p.156: "開皇九年平陳，又收戶五十萬。洎於大業二年，干戈不用，惟十八載，有戶八百九十萬矣。"; *Book of Sui* 隋書, vol.29, p.808: "大凡郡一百九十，縣一千二百五十五，戶八百九十萬七千五百四十六，口四千六百一萬九千九百五十六。"; also see Leng Guodong 冷國棟, *History of Chinese Population: Sui, Tang, and Five Dynasties* 中國人口史——隋唐五代時期, Shanghai: Fudan University, 2002, p.130.

state power, both the reunion of China and the weakening of great families might not have been so successful.

The forces of the great families were further weakened during the peasant wars at the end of Sui dynasty. Though this might be somewhat exaggerated, peasants rebels were said to have "killed all Sui officials and descendants of great families they encountered."[53] At the beginning of Tang dynasty, the power of the great families, though it still existed, could not be comparable to that during the time of disunity.

On the other hand, Buddhism was restored from its extermination in 570s with state support. There was the legend that Emperor Wen, the founder of Sui dynasty, was actually raised by a hidden Buddhist nun during his youth.[54] Buddhism was considered as an important part of his state program. In year 581, he promulgated the edict that anyone who wanted to become monastic would be permitted to do so.[55] In the same year, he ordered a temple be built at the foot of each of the Five Marchmounts, as well as in some important cities.[56] In 591, an edict was issued that one monastery for monks and one for nuns be established in every prefecture.[57] The number of monastics gradually recovered;

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[53] *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Old Book of Tang), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1975, vol.54, pp.2236-2237: "群盜得隋官及山東士子，皆殺之"; also in *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* 資治通鑒, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1956, vol.183, p.5715: "群盜得隋官及士族子弟皆殺之。"

[54] *Sui shu* 隋書, vol.1, "Biography of Gaozu", pp.1-2.

[55] *Sui shu* 隋書, vol.35, p.1099: "高祖普詔天下，任聽出家。"

[56] *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記 vol.12, T49.2034.107b29: "朕伏膺道化 念好清靜 其五嶽之下 宜各置僧寺一所"；T49.2034.107c11-13："其襄陽隋郡江陵晉陽。並宜立寺一所建碑頌德。"

[57] *Jinshi cuibian* 金石萃編 (Selected Collection of [Inscriptions] on Metal and Stone), reprinted by Shanghai: Baoshan shuju 寶善書局, in 光緒癸巳 (1893), vol.38, p.8 "Records of the Edict to Establish Temples for Monks and Nuns" 詔立僧尼二寺記.

the records of the number of monastics ranged from 230,000 to 500,000 for the period between year 590 and 604.[58] Though lacking more detailed materials for the economic aspect of Buddhist monasteries during the short-lived Sui dynasty, the state sponsorship and state-ordered temple building projects that were carried out everywhere must have helped Buddhist monasteries to regain their popularity and economic advantages to some degree. The state recognition of the economic significance of Buddhism (and the intention to limit it) was later reflected in the land policy of the Tang dynasty (618-907CE) which we will discuss in the next chapter: For the first time, monastics were considered the same as other registered population to be entitled to a certain amount of land from the state.

From the first spread of Buddhism in China during the disunited period to the reunion of China, Buddhism expanded in the conflicts between the state and great families. With privileges such as tax and corvée exemption, this new form of organization soon developed into a social and economic force that could not be neglected. It did attract considerable amount of wealth and manpower and thus diverged the revenue of the state, but the wealth accumulated in the monastic system was easy to be utilized by the state in time of need. Despite the traditional criticisms against Buddhist monasteries as a harmful existence to the wellbeing of the state, we see that they in fact assisted the state in its tussle with great families by channeling manpower and wealth away from them. And since monasteries were closely controlled by the state, when the accumulated wealth in monasteries increased to a certain degree, the government was comparatively free to

[58] Gernet, 1995, p.6.

confiscate their wealth through small and large scale persecution. In this light, Buddhist monasteries existed as a tool to gather wealth from society for the state.

CHAPTER II

Tang Dynasty: Transition of the Tax Status of Buddhist Monasteries

In the previous chapter, we have seen how Buddhist monasteries and the resources accumulated in monastic system could be utilized by the state. However, to first allow the rapid economic development of monasteries and then interfere it with persecution is certainly not a favourable means for the state to regulate religious organizations. We will see that the Tang state was groping for a better method to keep the relationship between the monastic and state economy in a more balanced way.

The Tang dynasty was the transition period of land and tax policies in Chinese history. In this chapter, we will discuss how the economic status of Buddhist monasteries was taken into consideration in the making of those policies. Despite the usual misunderstanding that Buddhist monasteries were still tax-exempt in the Tang dynasty and that this was one of the reasons for their rapid economic development, closer examination shows that Buddhist monasteries in fact were not legally granted the privilege of tax-exemption by the Tang state ever since the early period of the dynasty under Equal Land Distribution Policy and Zuyongdiao Tax Policy, although taxes may not have been regularly collected from monasteries due to practical problems related to the separate registration of monastics from common people. And after the Two Tax Policy was implemented in mid-Tang, historical materials show that Buddhist monasteries had to pay taxes in the same way as common households. The Tang dynasty is the period during which monasteries were in the process of losing their economic privileges and becoming more incorporated into the state economy as common households. In this way, the

economic connection between the state and monasteries became more close and regulated.

At the beginning of the Tang dynasty, the state largely adopted the Equal Land Distribution Policy (均田制) used by states in North China since the Northern Wei dynasty, but made certain adjustments to it. The most obvious change was to the defined recipients of state-bestowed land. In the Northern Wei, women, serfs and oxen were all qualified to receive land, but in the Tang dynasty, women (except for widows), serfs and oxen were no longer considered recipients, while Taoist and Buddhist monks and nuns, as well as merchants, were newly included.[59] A much-cited source for the carrying out of land distribution to Buddhist monastics is an official document recording a land issue to Shaolin templeas preserved in *Selected Collection of [Inscriptions] on Metal and Stone* (金石萃編, a 160-volume collection of inscriptions from Qin dynasty 秦 to Jin dynasty 金 compiled in Qing dynasty 清): Shaolin temple submitted an appeal to correct the categorization of their 40 *qing* (頃, equaled to 100 *mu*, and one *mu* in Tang dynasty is around 576 square metres[60]) land estate. This piece of estate, according to Shaolin temple, was an imperial bestowal for their contribution to the establishment of the Tang dynasty. However, it was wrongly registered by the previous General Rector (都維那) as "*koufen* land" (口分田, lit. land distributed for each mouth), that is, the land received through

[59] *Tang liu dian* 唐六典(Six Canons of Tang), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992, p.47: "凡道士給田三十畝，女冠二十畝, 僧尼亦如之。"
[60] Wilkinson, 2000, pp.236-238.

Equal Land Distribution Policy. Since now the state made the order to investigate and correct land estate registration, the Shaolin Temple appealed to change this 40 *qing* land back into the category of state bestowal.[61] [62] The date of this document is the sixth month of the sixth year of Zhenguan (632 CE), during the time of Emperor Taizong (唐太宗, r.627-649 CE).

Further evidence regarding the distribution of land to monastics is preserved in the book *A Grove of Pearls in a Dharma Garden* (法苑珠林) , which was a Buddhist encyclopedia compiled by the monk Daoshi (道世, ?-683 CE) in 668. This is a record regarding a case in 648 of a prisoner who possessed a version of the Taoist text *Scripture of the Three Emperors* (三皇經) on which there was a note indicating that the possessor of the text would become king or empress. After careful investigation, the governmental officials got the answer from some Taoist monastics that such a prophecy had been faked by a Taoist priest who had already died. An edict was promulgated to remove and destroy all *Scripture of the Three Emperors*. Based on this edict, the official in charge of land (田令官) submitted a court memorial which was also recorded by Daoshi: "Like in Buddhism where the monks and nuns receive precepts based on *vinaya* and then each is entitled to thirty *mu* of land, the Taoist monks and nuns today all rely on the *Scripture of the Three*

[61] *Jinshi cuibian* 金石萃編, vol.74, "Edict Regarding Bestowed Land of Shaolin Temple" 少林寺賜田敕, p.2*; Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (Complete Collection of Tang Literature), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1983, vol.986, "Permission for Shaolin Temple to Correct the Bestowed Land" 少林寺准敕改正賜田牒, pp.10196-10197.

[62] A more detailed discussion of this case can be seen in Tonami, Mamoru, *The Shaolin Monastery Stele on Mount Song*. Translated by P. A. Herbert. Edited by A. Forte, *Italian School of East Asian Studies Epigraphical Series*. Kyoto: Instituto Italiano di Cultura Scuola di Studi sull'Asia Orientale,1990.

Emperors to receive the upper and lower purity, in substitution of the precepts of Buddhist monks and nuns, and (in this way) are entitled to thirty *mu* of land. Now, since this scripture has been abolished and removed as a fake, the Taoist monks and nuns no longer have principles of receiving precepts, so they should not be entitled to land. Please abolish the land distribution to them with the abolition of the scripture." Hearing about this, Taoist monastics in the Capital, in fear of not being able to receive land any longer, approached the official and appealed to use the *Scripture of Dao and De* (道德經) to substitute for the *Scripture of the Three Emperors*, and this was later approved.[63]

These pieces of evidence indicate that the land distribution to monastics was indeed carried out at least during the early period of Tang dynasty. This is further confirmed by the records in *Tiansheng Laws* (天聖令), a Song compilation of Tang and Song laws which was discovered in 1998 in the library of Tianyige (天一閣) in Ningbo (寧波). *Tiansheng Laws* was compiled in year 1029 and is now the most complete existing preservation of Tang legislation. In its section on "Land Regulations" (田令), there was the record of "Regulation of the Twenty-fifth Year of Kaiyuan Period" (開元二十五年[737CE]令), in which it indicated that "for Taoist priests (道士) and nuns (女冠) who have received the *Scripture of Dao and De* and up, monks are entitled to thirty *mu* of land, while nuns get twenty *mu* of land. For Buddhist monks (僧) and nuns (尼) who have

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[63] *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (A Grove of Pearls in a Dharma Garden), vol. 55, T53.2122.708a08-24 : "又得田令官奏云。如佛教。依內律僧尼受戒。得蔭田人各三十畝。今道士女道士。皆依三皇經。受其上清下清。替僧尼戒處。亦合蔭田三十畝。此經既偽廢除。道士女道士既無戒法。即不合受田。請同經廢。"

received full precepts, this rule also applies."[64] Though we cannot be sure whether during the mid-eighth century, a period when the problem of land shortage was worsening, such edicts were effectively implemented or not, at least the right of monastics to receive land from the state was legally approved.

Land policy has always been closely related to tax policy. Before 780, the major tax system adopted by the state government was called *zuyongdiao* (租庸調, *zu* [租] was the yearly land tax required to be paid by everyone who received land; *yong* [庸] was the yearly corvée labour required by the state; and *diao* [調] was a certain amount of cotton, silk or silver each land recipient had to submit yearly). The *New History of the Tang* recorded the explanation of this tax system: "According to the Tang Regulations…For everyone who receives land [from the Equal Land Distribution Policy], he should pay two *shi* (石, approx. 79.3kg in Tang dynasty[65]) of millet every year, two *hu* (斛, equal to 石 before Southern Song dynasty) of rice; this is called *zu* (租). Depending on the produce of a village, he should pay two *pi* (匹, equals to four *zhang* 丈) of *juan* (絹) silk, two *zhang* (丈, approx.3 metres[66]) of *ling* (綾) silk and *shi* (絁) silk each, [if one pays in] cotton cloth, the amount is twenty percent more, and three *liang* (兩, approx.16g) of cotton,

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[64] Dai Jianguo 戴建國, "Studies on the Tang Codes of Kaiyuan Twenty-fifth Year" 唐《開元二十五年令 唐令》研究, *Historical Research* 歷史研究, 2000(02), p.38; Liu Xiaoping 劉小平 and Ma Lan 馬蘭, "Institutional Analysis of the Equal Land Policy and the Transformation of Monastic Economy in Tang Dynasty" 唐代均田制與寺院經濟變遷的制度化分析, *Social Sciences of Gansu Province* 甘肅社會科學 2009(04), p. 211.
[65] Wilkinson, 2000, p.236 & p.238.
[66] Ibid.

three *jin* (斤, approx.661g[67]) of hemp. If residing in a place where silkworms are not raised, one should pay fourteen *liang* of silver; this is called *dia*o (調). [The state] uses human labour twenty days every year, or two days more in a thirteen-month year. If one does not work as a labourer, he should pay three *chi* (尺, approx.30cm[68]) of *juan* silk [in substitution]; this is called *yong* (庸).”[69]

Modern scholars usually take for granted that Buddhist monastics enjoyed the privilege of being exempted from the major tax under the Zuyongdiao (租庸調) tax system in the early Tang dynasty. For example, the Chinese scholar Xie Chongguang (謝重光) in his paper discussing the situation of monastics' tax exemption stated that “there is no disagreement among scholars regarding the monastics enjoying the privilege of tax exemption.”[70] And Gernet, who although recognizes that there is evidence indicating Buddhist monastics were paying taxes, also considers that tax exemptions were absolute for monastics with official certificates, and the state was never able to “subject them to regular taxation or to actual corvée duty.”[71]

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (New Book of Tang*)*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975, vol.51, p.1342: “凡授田者，丁歲輸粟二石，稻三斛，謂之租。丁隨鄉所出，歲輸絹二匹，綾絁二丈，布加五之一，棉三兩，麻三斤，非蠶鄉則輸銀十四兩，謂之調。用人之力，歲二十日，閏加二日，不役者日為絹三尺，謂之庸。”

[70] Xie Chongguang 謝重光, “Brief Discussion on the Gradual Loss of Tax-exemption Privilege of Monasteries and Monastics in Tang Dynasty” 略論唐代寺院、僧尼免賦特權的逐步喪失, in *Studies on Buddhist Monastic Economy from Han to Tang Dynasty in the Past Fifty Years* 五十年來漢唐佛教寺院經濟研究, ed. He Ziquan 何茲全, Beijing: Beijing Normal University, 1986, p.241.

[71] Gernet,1995, p.32

However, there seem to have no official document to legally confirm this privilege of monastics. The tax policy mentioned above has stated clearly that everyone who received land should pay the major agricultural tax. This idea that everyone who received land should pay tax and take on labour duties under the Zuyongdiao tax system was concisely summarized by Lu Zhi (陸贄, 754-805 CE), the prime minister of Emperor Dezong (唐德宗, 742-805 CE): "So long as one possesses land, one has the liability for *zu*; so long as one possesses a family, he has the liability for *diao*; so long as one possesses a body, he has the liability of *yong*."[72] This renders it clear that the right of receiving land under the Equal Land Distribution Policy is directly connected to one's liability to pay the major tax under Zuyongdiao system. Since now Buddhist monastics were recipients of state-distributed land as commoners were (though they received less amount than commoners), according to the policy they should pay the major tax. But was there some other state policy that granted them the tax-exemption privilege?

Regulations regarding tax affairs in early Tang dynasty were also recovered in a complete form in the newly discovered *Tiansheng Laws* we mentioned above. In its section on "Regulation of Taxes and Labour Duties" (賦役令), people who were able to be exempted from the major tax were listed in detail. In total, this included five different categories. In the first category were those who enjoyed a reputation of high morality: sons and grandsons known for filial piety, men known for righteousness, and women with loyalty [to her diseased husband]. The second category was people of the imperial family,

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[72] *Luxuangong zouyi* 陸宣公奏議 (Court Memorials of Lu Xuangong), Lu Zhi 陸贄 (754-805 CE), Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe 江蘇古籍出版社, 1988, vol.14, p.319: "有田則有租，有家則有調，有身則有庸"

as well as the relatives of the female consort's family. The third category was governmental officials with certain ranks.

The most interesting categories are the fourth and fifth ones. They are very detailed lists which mentioned various social strata as tax-exempt. Besides low-level local officials (because such positions themselves were considered as labour duties, so during the year one took on such responsibilities, the regular tax was exempted), governmental teachers, teaching assistants and students, it also included practitioners, students and apprentices of medicine, herb-collecting, divination, massage, spells and charms, music, and hunting.[73]

In this list which so carefully included social responsibilities that could exempt one

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[73] *Tianyige mingchaoben tianshengling jiaozheng* 天一閣藏明鈔本天聖令校證 (Verified Ming Manuscript Edition of the Tiansheng Laws as Preserved in Tianyige), Tianyige Museum & Research Institution of History at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 2006, pp.60-62:
"諸孝子、順孫、義夫、節婦，志行聞於鄉閭者，申尚書省奏聞，表其門閭，同籍悉免課役。"
"諸皇宗籍屬宗正者及太皇太后、皇太后、皇后本服緦麻以上親，皇太子妃本服大功以上親，親王妃及內命婦一品本服朞以上親，五品以上祖父兄弟並免色役。
"諸文武職事官三品以上，若郡王父祖兄弟子孫五品以上，及勳官二品，若郡縣公侯伯子男並子免並免課役。"
"諸正、義及常平倉督，縣博士，州縣助教，視流外九品以上州縣市令，品子任雜掌、親事、帳內，國子、太學、四門、律、書、算等學生，俊士，無品直司人，衛士，庶士，虞侯，牧長，內給使，散使，天文、醫、蔔、按摩、咒禁、樂園等生，諸州醫博士、助教，兩京坊正，縣錄事，裡正，州縣佐（使）[史]、倉史、市史，外監錄事，府史，牧尉、（史）[長？]，雜職，驛長，烽帥，烽副，防閣，邑士，庶僕，傳送馬驢主，采藥師，獵師，宰手，太常寺音聲人，陵戶，防人在防及將防年本州非者，防徒人在役，流人充侍（謂在配所充侍者，三年外依常式），使並免課役。其貢舉人誠得（弟）[第]，並諸色人年勞已滿應合入流，有事故未敘者，皆准此。其流外長上三品以上及品子任雜掌並親事、帳內，以理解者，亦依此例。應敘不赴者，即依無資法"
"諸漏刻生、漏童、藥童、奉（解）[觶]、羊車小史、岳瀆齋郎、獸醫生、諸村正、執衣，墓戶，並免雜徭。外監掌固典事、屯典事亦准此。"

from state major tax and labour duties, monastics both of Buddhism and Taoism were not mentioned at all. If we combine together the Equal Land Distribution policy, the *Zuyongdiao* Tax Policy and the tax regulations above, the conclusion is that monastics should pay the major tax because they received land, and the tax regulation did not granted them special exemption from such liability. Certainly, it is highly probable that some practitioners of spell and divination were Buddhist and/or Taoist monastics, and these monastics should be legally exempted from the major tax according to this list. But this in fact indicated that the identity of monastic *per se* was not legally considered as a tax-exempt category.

In his book on the Buddhist economy during the fifth to tenth century, Gernet cited some comments in the *Commentary of Baizhang's Regulation of Zen Monasteries* (百丈清規證義記) to indicate that Buddhist monastics enjoyed the state-granted privilege of tax-exemption. However, this text is a commentary written by a Qing dynasty (1644-1911CE) monk Yirun (儀潤, Qing dynasty) based upon the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 CE) version of this Monastic Regulation. The first passage Gernet cited was near the beginning of the first volume: "The emperor has especially exempted our disciples from taxes and corvée duties so that in the tranquility of their residences they may apply all their efforts to religious cultivation."[74] In fact, this passage was put there by the Yuan compiler. In Yuan dynasty, Buddhist monastics were legally exempted from taxes and labour duties by continuous generations of emperors, which could not tell the situation in

[74] Gernet, 1995, p.31; original text in *Cixiu baizhang qinggui* 敕修百丈清规 (Pure Monastic Codes of Baizhang Edited upon Imperial Edict), vol.1, T48.2025.1112c22-23.

Tang dynasty. The second passage Gernet cited was the lists of great benefactions granted to Buddhism by emperors written down by the Qing dynasty commentator Yirun, the Qing dynasty monk, which included the "exemption from corvee duties". But in fact Yirun stated that he was citing these words from the Buddha, who according to him once said that "the mercy from state is manifested in ten benefactions."[75] This passage again tells us nothing about the Tang state's taxation of Buddhist monasteries.

Our conclusion so far is that the Tang state did not legally grant Buddhist monastics with the privilege of being exempted from the major tax. However, in scholars and officials' criticisms against Buddhism in Tang dynasty, we do find that tax-exemption of monastics was often one of the reasons they were bothered by Buddhism. In 706, a high official Li Qiao (李嶠, 644-713 CE) submitted a memorial to Emperor Zhongzong (唐中宗, r.683-684,705-710 CE) pointing out the serious problem caused by private ordination of Buddhist monastics: "Now monastics with private ordination amounted to almost several hundred thousand. Among them those of high-level household with many workers [in one household], and those cunning and big merchants deceitfully make certificates, put names on it to fake ordination. The state income and national defense depend upon labourers. Now labourers all go forth [that is leave home to become monks], soldiers all enter the faith, when it comes to the time to collect taxes, how can the state work out?"[76] Later, another high official Xin Tipi (辛替否,?-?) also submitted a memorial to Emperor

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[75] Gernet 1995, p.31; original text in XZJ63.1244.382a13-22.
[76] *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書, vol.123, p.4370: "(神龍二年[706 CE])今道人私度者，幾數十萬。其中高戶多丁、黠商大賈，詭作台符，羼名偽度。且國計軍防、並仰丁口。今丁皆出家，兵悉入道、征行租賦，何以備之。"

Ruizong (唐睿宗, r. 684-690 CE) criticizing the former Emperor Zhongzong who "constructed temples endlessly, [thus] wasting tens of billions of wealth; granted ordination ceaselessly, [thus] exempting the *zu* and *yong* tax of several hundred thousand people."[77] During the time of Emperor Zhongzong, the Princess Anle (安樂公主), Princess Changning (長寧公主) and some other imperial relatives granted ordination to anyone who wished to pay thirty thousand cash.[78] The two memorials above suggested that if someone was ordained, or even in possession of a faked ordination certificate, he probably would not pay the major tax. Thus the extensive granting of ordination thus became a serious problem as mentioned by these two court members. So how could Buddhist monastics have enjoyed tax-exemption although such a privilege was not legally recognized?

Although the Tang state may not have intended to recognize Buddhist monastics as a tax-exempt category, under the Zuyongdiao tax system, there were several practical problems related to the tax collection from monastics. The exaction of the major tax was based upon registered individual labour and households. The population local government

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[77] *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書, vol.101, p.3159: "造寺不止，枉費財者數百億；度人不休，免租庸者數十萬。"

[78] *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒 (Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government), vol.209, no.25 of "Tang Chronicles" 唐紀二十五, p.6623: "安樂、長甯公主及皇后妹成國夫人、上官婕妤、婕妤母沛國夫人鄭氏、尚宮柴氏、賀婁氏、女第五英兒、隴西夫人趙氏，皆依勢用事，請謁受賕，雖屠沽臧獲，用錢三十萬，則別降墨敕除官，斜封付中書，時人謂之"斜封官"；錢三萬則度為僧尼。其員外、同正、試、攝、檢校、判、知官凡數千人。西京、東都各置兩吏部侍郎，為四銓，選者歲數萬人"; A more detailed study on this ordination issue is by Barrett, T. H. "Buddhist Precepts in a Lawless World: Some Observations on theLinhuai Ordination Scandal". In *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya*, edited by W. M. Bodiford. Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2005, pp.101-123.

had control of were only those native people who were registered and stably stayed in the local district. However, the register of monastics was kept in a separate system from the register of lay people,[79] thus in practice, it would be hard for the local tax collectors to collect from monastics the taxes based upon individual persons. The registration of received land was also a problem. As some scholars have reasonably argued, the so-called monastics "receiving land" was not a process of the state giving new land to each monastic. Instead, it was a re-registration of the land already possessed by monasteries during their expansion.[80] These re-registered land estates might still belong to the monastery as a whole, instead of being directly granted to individual monastics. What is more, for the newly ordained "several hundred thousand" monastics, how could the state actually find land to distribute to them at all? So for those Buddhists who possessed ordination, whose name had been removed from the local population register, and who did not receive land from the state as a monastic, it would be practically impossible for the local government to collect the major tax from them.

With the intention to change the situation of the difficulty in collecting major tax from Buddhist monastics, during the time of Emperor Dezong (唐德宗, r.779-805 CE) a high official called Peng Yan (彭偃, circa 700-800 CE) submitted the suggestion of directly exacting taxes from individual monastics, with no regard to the land they possessed. He required that "monks under fifty years old submit four *pi* (匹, approx.12 metres) of *juan*

[79] For more detailed study on the monastic register, see Bai Wengu 白文固, "The Management Institution of Monastic Registry in Tang Dynasty" 唐代的僧籍管理制度, *Academic Journal of Pumen* 普門學報 issue 15, 2003(05), pp.1-20.
[80] See Zhang Gong 張弓, "Monastic Estates in Tang Dynasty" 唐代的寺產, *Studies on the History of Chinese Society and Economy*, 1989(04), pp.12-19.

(絹, a sort of thick but loosely woven silk) every year, and two *pi* for nuns under fifty years old. And they should bear the same labour duties as normal people do." He calculated that if his suggestion were adopted, the tax income of the state would increase by one-third.[81] The Emperor commended his suggestion, but due to the opposition of other officials, it was not carried out. However, though these measures of Peng Yan were not adopted immediately, the soon-to-come new state taxation policy in fact resolved the practical problem of taxing Buddhist monasteries.

In year 780, Emperor Dezong approved the new taxation system formulated by the Prime Minister Yang Yan (楊炎, 727-781 CE). This is the Two Tax Policy (兩稅法) which was also generally adopted by the later dynasties for the next eight hundred years. At the time, land annexation was becoming more and more serious; with little surplus land in the hands of the state, the Equal Land Distribution Policy has long been unable to be implemented actually. Land and wealth gathered in the hand of landlords (including large Buddhist monasteries) who were able to avoid taxes and labour duties through one way or other, while the poor peasants, as belonged to registered population, still had to pay the major tax of Zuyongdiao, which did not take into consideration the actual economic status of a person or a household. The result is more and more poor and landless peasants became "escaped household" (逃戶), or "immigrant household"(客戶), as opposed to native household "主戶"), moving away from their hometown where they

[81] *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書, vol.127, p.3581: "臣伏請僧道未滿五十者，每年輸絹四疋；尼及女道士未滿五十者，每年輸絹二疋；其雜色役與百姓同。有才智者令入仕，請還俗為平人者聽。但令就役輸課，為僧何傷。臣竊料其所出，不下今之租賦三分之一，然則陛下之國富矣，蒼生之害除矣。"

were registered to avoid increasing taxes and labour duties.

It was mainly in reaction to this situation that the new taxation policy was promulgated. Under this new system, the major tax, which was called "Two Tax" because it was collected twice every year in summer and autumn, was no longer exacted from every person at the same amount, but was based upon the property of a household. Ideally, the previous tax and labour duties in *zu*, *yong*, *diao* system would all be abolished. Every year the state made the total budget for the whole year including expenses on projects that previously were done through state labour duties. Then the total amount was distributed to every household no matter whether they were indigenous or immigrants. Households were divided into different levels based upon their own properties: the higher the household level, the more taxes were charged. In other words, ideally, the only factor related to one's tax amount was the land estates and capitals the household owned.[82]

The effect of the new taxation system, as commented by the literatus Sun Guangxian (孫光憲, 901-968 CE), was that "there is no estate or capital that is not taxed under the heavens."[83] Under the new system, to tax monastic properties became both legally required and practically possible. In year 811, Buddhist monks in the Capital appealed for an exemption of the tax imposed on their land estates and mills, but were rejected by the Prime Minister Li Jifu (李吉甫, 758-814 CE), who stated that: "There has always been a

[82] For a more detailed study of Two Tax Policy, see Zhang Zexian 張澤咸, *Historical Notes of the Taxes and Corvées in Tang and Five Dynasties* 唐五代賦役史草, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986, pp.118-188.
[83] *Beimeng suoyan* 北夢瑣言 (Trivial Words of the Northern Dream), Sun Guangxian 孫光憲 (901-968 CE), Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981, vol.1, p.2.

quota for the cash and rice [to be collected as tax]. To relieve the monastics who possess excessive wealth and thus distribute [their quota] to poor peasants should definitely not be allowed."[84] Since now to pay taxes had become the standard for monasteries, sometimes an exemption could be bestowed as a reward for distinguished merit. The general Liu Fen (劉汾, 848-921 CE) made major contributions in the suppression of peasant uprisings at the end of the ninth century. Emperor Zhaozong (唐昭宗, r.889-904 CE), when heard that Liu Fen built a Buddhist temple called Nanshan Monastery (南山寺), bestowed it with the privilege of being exempted from tax.[85]

To summarize, the tax-exemption of Buddhist monasteries in early Tang dynasty was the result of more practical problems than a state-granted privilege. Since the end of the eighth century, when the new Two-Tax Policy wiped away the practical problems, Buddhist monasteries were required to pay their tax quotas based upon their land estates and capitals. But monastics still had some advantages over commoners. Although legally all unpaid labour duties were abolished after the implementation of Two Tax policy, on the ground local governments still frequently required the registered people to work on governmental projects.[86] Thus being a monastic and thus having one's name removed from the local population register could still exempt one from those exactions.

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[84] *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書, vol.148, p.3994:"（元和六年正月）京城諸僧有請以莊、磑免稅者。吉甫奏曰：'錢米所征，素又定額，寬緇徒有餘之力，配貧下無告之甿，必不可許。'憲宗乃止。"

[85] *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文, vol.793, "Records of Dashe Temple" 大赦庵記, p.8316: "詔曰：汾戰陣能勇，思祖能敬，其山寺稅糧俱沐優免。"

[86] Zhang Zexian 張澤咸, 1986, pp.291-293; Zheng Xuemeng 鄭學檬 ed., *History of Chinese Taxes and Corvée Institutions* 中國賦役制度史, Xiamen: Xiamen University, 1994, pp.328-331.

From the examination of Tang land and tax policies, we see the attempts of the state to better incorporate Buddhist monasteries in the state economic system. Before the Tang dynasty, Buddhist monasteries were shelters for people to escape the exaction of tax and labour duties, the extreme result of which was that the number of Buddhist monastics rose to almost ten percent of the total population during Northern Wei and Northern Qi dynasties. And after the Tang dynasty, Since later dynasties largely adopted the Two Tax Policy of Tang, the role of Buddhist monasteries and monastics as tax-payers was largely fixed. As we will see in the next chapter, not only Buddhist monasteries needed to pay the major tax and some extra tax to offset their labour duties in Song dynasty, in some cases they even undertook a heavier tax burden than common households.

CHAPTER III

Song Dynasty: Heavy Taxes and Active Economic Activities

In the previous chapter we have discussed the transition in the tax-exemption privileges of monasteries during the Tang dynasty, after which monasteries were treated more as common households in the state economic system. We will see in this chapter how this tendency was inherited and developed in the Song dynasty. Regarding the Buddhist monastic economy in Song, there were some conspicuous phenomena: on the one hand, generally the tax burden of Song monasteries was quite heavy, in some cases heavier than common households; but on the other hand, some Song monasteries were very prosperous, and they actively engaged in economic activities. The most telling case is the situation in Fujian area, where the tax burden of Buddhist monasteries was the heaviest while monasteries there were the most prosperous, due to the virtuous circle in the economic relationship among monasteries, local government and common people. Song government and many Song officials were well aware of the economic benefits Buddhist monasteries could bring to the state and made good use of them. Such situation in Song dynasty showed that if utilized well, the economic potential of Buddhist monasteries could greatly benefit the state economy.

It is generally accepted that the Song dynasty distinguished itself from previous dynasties with its impressive economic growth and expansion of commercial and industrial

activities in society.[87] And it was under such a social environment that we started to see the emergence of some different views from official and scholars regarding the economic aspect of Buddhism than those during and before Tang dynasty.

A literary sketch written by a Song literatus Luo Dajing recorded a story of Fan Zhongyan (范仲淹, 989-1052 CE). Fan was an influential minister and intellectual in early Northern Song dynasty (960-1127CE), and also one of the earliest governmental officials recorded to perceive the construction of Buddhist monasteries from a positive perspective. When he was the prefect of Western Zhejiang (浙西), the region encountered a terrible famine. Not implementing the usual famine-relief measures, Fan Zhongyan instructed the Buddhist monasteries in his region that since the price for labour was low during the time of famine, they could now start their large-scale construction works and/or renovations. Thus the construction projects of Buddhist monasteries in Hangzhou (杭州) were all launched. Governmental building projects such as the storehouses and dormitories were also ordered to be started at the same time. The supervising official thus impeached Fan Zhongyan as not engaged in famine-relief tasks, but harming people and wasting wealth through those construction projects, the often adopted clichés targeted at Buddhist constructions since the time of the Southern and Northern dynasties. Fan Zhongyan explained that the reason why he encouraged construction works was exactly to relieve the sufferings of the poor by channeling the wealth of the rich. Thus the

[87] For example, see Gernet, Jacques, *Daily Life in China: on the Eve of Mongol Invasion, 1250-1276*, Stanford University Press, pp.76-78; Hartwell, Robert, "Market, Technology, and the Structure of Enterprise in the Development of the Eleventh Century Chinese Iron and Steel Industry", *The Journal of Economic History*, vol.26, No.1 (Mar., 1966), p.29.

workers and artisans could be fed by the payments of either the governmental or the Buddhist construction projects, instead of being starved to death by the famine. It was said that during the year of this terrible famine, only Fan Zhongyan's region was just "hungry" without being "damaged."[88] Similar measures were also adopted by a Southern Song official Chen Dang (陳讜, 1134-1216 CE). When it was suggested that the large scale construction project of a Buddhist temple in the county of Puyang (莆陽, in Fujian 福建) should be stopped during the time of famine, Chen smiled and said:

> Could the construction of the *stūpa* being carried out by monastics themselves? Labourers of this area had to be hired to do that. [The wealth of Buddhist monasteries] was collected from the rich, and [through the construction works] distributed to the poor. Thus the poor could earn their food relying on it, and a *stūpa* could be built. In this time of famine, the fear is that Buddhists do not carry out construction works, how can you on the contrary desire to stop them?[89]

Generally, traditional officials and scholars viewed Buddhism as an economic burden to Chinese society, and as we have encountered in previous chapters, their arguments usually fell into three lines: First, Buddhist monasteries were generally tax-exempt (before the Two Tax Policy) and thus caused a fiscal problem to the state; second, monastics were generally not working in the fields, thus produced nothing but had to be fed by indigent peasants; and thirdly, Buddhist construction projects were a huge waste of the wealth in society. Such views certainly still existed during Song dynasty, but the often-seen rivaling perspectives reflected that some changes were occurring during this period of time.

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[88] *Helin yulu* 鶴林玉露 (Jade Dew of the Crane Woods), Luo Dajing 羅大經 (1196-1252 CE), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983, vol.3, p.52.
[89] Ibid.

Let us first take a look at the tax situation of Buddhist monasteries in Song dynasty. We have discussed in detail the tax situation of Buddhist monastics in Tang dynasty in the last chapter. Since the end of eighth century, when the Two Tax Policy was implemented, monasteries had to pay the major tax. But they were still able to avoid the labour duties which were legally abolished but in fact often imposed upon commoners.

The Song state generally adopted the Two Tax Policy as its major tax system. Monasteries were taxed based upon their properties as lay people were. Sometimes the Emperor might bestow certain monasteries which were closely related to the imperial family with the privilege of tax-exemption. For example, Jianlong Temple (建隆寺) in Yangzhou (揚州), which was transformed from a dwelling palace of Emperor Taizu (宋太祖, r.960-976 CE),[90] was exempted from land tax in year 1014.[91] But most monasteries were not able to get such advantage. Shousheng Temple (壽聖禪寺) in Hangzhou, though, was the temple for the imperial family to burn incense (御前香火寺), still "paid the regular tax every year".[92] Wanshou Temple of Jingshan (徑山萬壽寺), which belonged to the highest level monastery system—"Five Mountains and Ten Monasteries" (五山十剎) in Song dynasty—and which was the site for praying for the imperial family, was exempted from commercial taxes for ritual works and temporary taxes due to a

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90 *Song shi* 宋史 (History of Song), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1977, vol.1, p.8: "[趙匡胤]以揚州行宮為建隆寺。"

91 *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑒長編 (Continued Long Scroll of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1986, vol.82, p.1868: "(大中祥符七年三月甲辰) 免揚州建隆寺田租。"

92 *Xianchun lin'an zhi* 咸淳臨安志 (Gazetteer of Linan in Xianchun Period), Qian Shuoyou 潛說友 (1216-1288CE), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1990, vol.81, p.4111.

special imperial bestowal, but was still required to pay the regular tax.[93]

Monastics were still exempted from corvée in the same way as single, female and official households. But different from the situation during and before Tang dynasty, such exemption should be offset by an extra tax called labour-assisting cash (助役錢) since the promulgation of *Labour Duties Enrollment Law* (募役法) in year 1071.[94] Besides the regular tax, there were many other exactions under different forms that Buddhist monasteries/monastics had to undertake. These taxes could be temporarily established by local governments in time of need. *Kepei* (科配, tax quota) is such a category including a variety of coerced buying. The most widely adopted one was the quota for salt. The Song state monopolized the trading of salt and local governments were required to sell a certain amount each year. In order to fulfill such requirement, some local governments made people buy salt only from their source, ordering that each adult man in commoner household should buy one *jin* (斤, approx. 633g.[95]) per month and half *jin* per month for each adult monk.[96] There were also the quotas for alcohol and vinegar. An official Wang

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[93] *Songyin wenji* 松隱文集 (Collection of Songyin), Cao Xun 曹勛 (1098-1174 CE), SKQS 1129, fas.30, “Continued Notes for Arhats in Mount Jing” 徑山續羅漢記, p.506.

[94] *Song shi*宋史, vol.177, p.4301: “其坊郭等第戶及未成丁、單丁、女戶、寺觀、品官之家,舊無色役而出錢者，名助役錢。”

[95] Wilkinson, 2000, p.238.

[96] *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑒長編, vol.251, p.6124: (熙寧七年三月戊午[1073]) “兩浙察訪使沈括上奏: ‘酒州都鹽務免納船戶，而以官鹽等第敷配，並給曆抑配居民、寺觀’”; *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 (The Assembled Important [Administrative Documents] of The Song Dynasty), Shanghai: Dadong shuju 大東書局, 1935, “Food and Goods” 食貨, vol.24, p.23 : “(元豐六年[1083]，知瓊州劉威)相度瓊州、昌化、萬安、朱崖軍民戶，鄉村、坊廓第一至第三等每丁逐月買鹽一斤，第四、第五等及客戶、僧道、童行每丁逐月半斤，不以日月為限，歲終買足。"

Yan (王炎) noted the heavy burden of those unregulated taxes in the Circuit of Hubei (湖北路): "… the forth, low-level officials, neighborhood administrators, households supervisors and monasteries pay alcohol boiling cash (煮酒錢) each year; the fifth, monasteries and shamans pay vinegar cash (醋錢) every day…"[97] Quotas for tea also existed in the south. This even attracted the attention of the prime minister Wang Anshi (王安石, 1021-1086 CE), who commented that "in the south, [tea] was all sold by government. But since the government tea could not be consumed [because it was too bad], most of it was made into quotas for monasteries and tea houses…"[98] The issue became so serious that in year 1127, the state government had to promulgate an edict banning such coerced buying adopted by local governments.[99] Incense was another thing sold in this way. When the aloes wood in Fujian (福建) could not be sold, it was made into quotas to be purchased by monastics, musicians, painters and so on.[100]

It seems that monasteries/monastics in Song dynasty have become a category from whom any tax could be exacted reasonably. For salt quotas, they were considered in the same way as commoner households; for alcohol quotas, they were sorted with low-level

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[97] *Shuangxi leigao* 雙溪類稿 (Collection of the Double Creeks), Wang Yan 王炎 (1138-1218 CE), *SKQS* 1155, fas.20, p.660, "Memorial to Liu Yuezhou"上劉嶽州: "公吏、裡正、攬戶、僧寺歲敷煮酒錢，四也;僧寺、師巫日納醋錢，五也……"

[98] *Linchuan xiansheng wenji* 臨川先生文集 (Collected Works of Master Linchuan), Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086 CE), Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju , 1959, vol.70, "Twelve Problems with Tea Merchants" 茶商十二說, pp.743-744.

[99] *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿, "Foods and Goods" 食貨志, vol.32, p.21.

[100] *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編, vol.310, p.7521: "(元豐三年十二月庚申)每年省司下出香四州軍買香，而四州軍在海外，官吏並不據時估實直，沉香每兩隻支錢一百三十文，既不可買，即以等料配香戶，下至僧道、樂人、畫匠之類，無不及者。"

officials; tea quotas were for monastics and tea houses; incense quotas were for monastics and artists. Local governments would hardly forget Buddhist monasteries when they were in need of income. We also started to see poems written by monks and sympathetic literati in this period lamenting the tax burden upon Buddhist monasteries/monastics. The reputed official, writer and poet Lou Yue (樓鑰, 1137-1213 CE) wrote in lamentation:

> The great thousand-year religious site on the mountain of celebrity,
> Desolated just because of the heavy taxes;
> I want to ask the old heaven in front of the mountain
> Which gentleman in the future could gallop here?[101]

Regarding the tax burden of Buddhist monasteries in Song dynasty, the Circuit of Fujian (福建路) might be the most illustrative case. Fujian was the region where Buddhism was most popular, and at the same time, the tax burden of monasteries was the heaviest. The minister and scholar Wu Qian (吳潛 1195-1262 CE) in the Southern Song dynasty made an often-cited remark that "[the spread of] Buddhist monasteries is different depending upon the regions. [The number of monasteries and monastics in] Hunan (湖南) is less than that in Jiangxi (江西), Jiangxi is less than Liangzhe (兩浙), and Liangzhe is less than Minzhong (閩中, another name of Fujian 福建)."[102] The popularity of Buddhism in Fujian was part of the legacy from the regime of Min (閩國) here during the Five

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[101] *Gongkui ji* 攻媿集 (Collection of Gongkui), Lou Yue 樓玥 (1137-1213 CE), as preserved in *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊 vol.1148, Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1919, fas.81, "Seeing off the Elder Who is going to Reside at Guizong Temple in Lu Mountain" 送一老住廬山歸宗, pp.75-76.

[102] *Xuguogong zouyi* 許國公奏議 (Court Memorials of Duke Xu), Wu Qian 吳潛 (1195-1262 CE), as in *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編, Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1939, fas.2, p.34: "寺院所在不同，湖南不如江西，江西不如兩浙，兩浙不如閩中。"

Dynasties (907-960 CE). The founder of the Min state, Wang Shenzhi (王審知, 862-925 CE), strongly supported Buddhism both ideologically and economically.[103] The *Song History* recorded that "the state of Min differentiated the land of its six prefectures into three levels: the fertile land was bestowed to Buddhist and Taoist monasteries; the mid- and low-level land was given to native and immigrant people."[104] According to the gazetteer of Fuzhou (福州) prefecture compiled in year 1182, of its 12 counties, on average one-fifth of the land (including fields and mountains) was possessed by Buddhist monks. This number in the gazetteer is the statistics of Southern Song dynasty, when Buddhism there was already in a process of declining. According to the compiler, "the earlier document said that Buddhist monastics and lay people each possessed half [of the land]."[105] With statistics of the population in this area in Southern Song dynasty, the gazetteer compiler calculated that "for common people, seven persons share one hundred *mu* of land; and for monastics, two persons share one hundred *mu* of land."

Such abundance of Buddhist monasteries bothered some scholars. Chen Chun (陳淳, 1159-1223 CE), a favorite disciple of Zhu Xi (朱熹,1130-1200 CE) and an important personality in the development of "the School of Principle" (理學), strongly criticized the wealth of Buddhist monasteries and supported his argument using evidence from his

[103] For a more detailed discussion of the Buddhist tradition in the Fujian area, see Brose, Benjiamin, *Buddhist Empires: Saṃgha-State Relations in Tenth-Century China*, PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 2009.
[104] *Song shi* 宋史, vol.173, "Records of Foods and Goods" 食貨志, p.4191: "初，閩以福建六郡之田分三等，膏腴者給僧寺、道院，中下者給土著、流寓。"
[105] See You Biao 遊彪, *History of the Monastic Economy in Song Dynasty* 宋代寺院經濟史稿, Baoding: Hebei University, 2003, p.111.

hometown Zhangzhou (漳州), a prefecture in the Southeast area of Fujian: "[If we] divide all the produces in Zhangzhou into seven [equal] portions, common households possess one portion, and monasteries possess six portions. Among the one portion belonged to common households, there is few upper level households with a yearly produce of ten thousand *hu* (斛, approx. 58.5 litres[106]) of rice. Even households with hundreds or one hundred *hu* are not many. Most are families of thirty or fifty *hu*, who have no container retaining rice at home. They work hard all year long to feed the family, but still cannot support themselves. Common people in Zhangzhou are so poor, thus the government should not impose even the slightest disturbance upon them. As for the monastic households that possess six portions, the upper-level monasteries enjoy a yearly produce of tens of thousands *hu*, the next level monasteries possess more than ten thousand, or several thousand *hu*. The lower level ones possess six to seven hundred, or three to five hundred *hu*; and even the smallest ones in poor village have more than one hundred *hu*, which are still very abundant compared with common households." After showing these statistics, Chen Chun expressed his strong disgust regarding the existence of Buddhist monastics: "These monks, who destroy family relationships and damage [Confucian] teachings, who neither work in the field nor produce silk, who are without any use, singly occupy [lands and produces] with no reason, leisurely live and enjoy [their possessions]…"[107] For him, the existence of Buddhist monasteries had only negative

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[106] Wilkinson, 2000, p. 236 and p. 238.

[107] *Beixi da quanji* 北溪大全集 (Large Collection of Beixi), Chen Chun 陳淳(1159-1223 CE), *SKQS*1168, fas.43, p.10, "Proposal to Transform Shangzhao Temple to School" 擬上趙寺丞改學移貢院: "舉漳州之產而七分之，民戶其一，而僧戶居其六。於一分民

effects.

Not every scholar agreed with this kind of criticism. A high official and writer Lin Xiyi (林希逸, 1193-1271CE), who was born in Fuzhou (福州), lived during almost the same period as Chen Chun and was also a scholar belonging to the "School of Principle", perceived the situation of Buddhist monasteries in Fujian from an entirely different perspective than Chen Chun:

> It seems to us that the prosperity and declining of Buddhist monasteries is insignificant to things. But according to my observation, the ***hedi*** and *yundi* (和糴, 運糴, the government's buying rice or grains from people, usually at an unfair rate) tax in Jiangxi, Hunan and Zhejiang, and the transportation duties in the East and West of the Huai river damaged the producing households severely, while there are still other taxes that could not be predicted. Applying what I have observed to what I have not, the situation in other areas can be roughly known. Only we people in Fujian get foods and clothes from the land and have never heard about other taxes except for the Two Tax. But [if we] ask the Buddhist monasteries [here], they need to pay cash when making offerings, when there are large-scale rituals and also for the exemption of labour duties; for the yearly major tax, [they pay extra in the form of] buying certificates; for the autumn crops, [they pay extra in the form of] governmental rice-borrowing. All the needs of the government, no matter how tiny or how huge, were all offset through taxing [Buddhist monasteries] based upon their properties… this is why our fathers said that 'Buddhist monasteries are the protection of Southern Fujian'… [There are mistakenly stated words which] only recognize that land is limited in our densely populated area, and more than half of the land goes into Buddhist monasteries. But what the rice [produced on the land of monasteries] supported are our local people; how can [the rice] be moved and sent away?[108]

戶之中，上等富戶歲穀以千斛計者絕少。其次數百至百斛者亦不多見，類皆三五十斛，無擔石之家。終歲營營為仰事俯育之計，且不能以自給；則為漳之民戶者甚貧，在官司絕不可更有絲毫之擾。以六分僧戶言之，上寺歲人數萬斛，其次萬餘斛，或數千斛，其下亦六、七百斛或三、五百斛，雖窮村至小之院，亦登百斛，視民戶極為富衍。以滅倫敗教，不耕不蠶，塊然一無用之僧，獨無故竊據而奄有之，閒居以安享之。"

[108] *Zhuxi Yanzhai shiyigao xuji* 竹溪鬳齋十一稿續集 (Continued Collection of the Eleven Articles of Zhuxi Yanzhai), Lin Xiyi 林希逸 (1193-1271 CE), *SKQS* 1185, fas.10, "Records for the Reconstruction of Lianshi Temple" 重建斂石寺記, p.12: "僧寺之興廢，以吾儕觀之，若於事無所折損益也。然余觀江、湖、浙之和糴、運糴，淮東西之車

It is interesting to compare these two views. Chen Chun's words were representative of the traditional view among governmental officials and scholars since the first spread of Buddhism in China. Buddhist monastics were of no use because they did not produce any agricultural products, only being fed by peasants who work hard on the field. Traditional scholars who firmly held the view that agriculture is the only foundation of the state could not endure the fact that Buddhist monastics, as parasites of society, lived well and possessed large amount of land without making any substantial contribution. They stole the wealth from people and the state, and were one of the biggest problems harming the well-being of the country.

But when it comes to Song dynasty, this view could no longer dominate the intellectual world. We have seen that Lin Xiyi, as well as Fan Zhongyan and Chen Dang mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, approached the issue of Buddhist monasteries from another direction. While traditional scholars like Chen Chun arrived at their conclusion upon a simple model in which the number of people directly engaged in agricultural activities was the single most important factor in deciding the economic well-being of the state, scholars like Lin Xiyi and Fan Zhongyan took into consideration the positive economic effects exerted by the flow of economic resources in their model. The annexation of land and wealth is inevitable in any society. But the land and wealth

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馭夫腳，其為產家害極慘而他科索不豫焉。以餘所見，推所未見，概可知矣。獨吾閩之人衣食其田，自二稅之外無所與聞，問之僧寺則上供有銀，大禮有銀，免丁又有銀：歲賦則有祠牒貼助，秋苗則有白米撮借。與夫官府百需，靡細靡大，皆計產科之。糴必以錢，雖在諸寺，猶大家也。故前輩有日：僧寺閩南之保障。余常以為仁人之言，數千年來官病之。謬謬者，但曰吾鄉地狹人稠，田之大半，皆入諸寺。然而穀之食者，邦人也。豈輦而他出乎?"

annexed in Buddhist monasteries could be channeled out in a way more beneficial to local people: as is shown in the cases above, Buddhist monasteries could bear more tax burdens to attenuate the governmental exaction upon common people, or they could provide jobs through large-scale construction projects in year of famine.

By Song dynasty, the development in agricultural technologies has enabled the emergence of more cities and the existence of large number of non-agricultural population, and Song state might also be the first dynasty in China that encouraged commercial activities. Throughout Song dynasty, the state income from non-agricultural taxes was in a process of continuous increasing. According to a study by Chinese scholar Jia Daquan (賈大泉), in 997, the total tax revenue of the state was 35,590,000,000 cash; among it, 65 percent was from the agricultural tax (Two Tax), and 35 percent from taxes on salt, tea, alcohol and commercial activities. In 1021, the total tax revenue was 57,230,000,000 cash, 53 percent of which was from non-agricultural taxes, exceeding the income from agricultural tax. Around 1077, the total tax income has risen to 70,700,000,000 cash, and among it, agricultural tax only counted for 30 percent.[109]

Buddhist monasteries and monastics were an active force contributing to the prosperity of commerce in Song dynasty. Large monasteries in cities actually played the role of great markets. The Great Xiangguo Temple (大相國寺 Great Monastery of the

[109] Jia Daquan 賈大泉, "The Impact of Song Dynasty's Tax Policy on the Development of Social Economy" 宋代賦稅政策對社會經濟發展的影響, *Academic Journal of Southwestern Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences)* 西南師範大學學報(人文社會科學版),1981(04), p.84; Ye Tan 葉坦, *On the Enriching State and Enriching People: Observation Based upon Song Dynasty*, 富國富民論——立足于宋代的考察, Beijing: Beijing chubanshe , 1991, p.37.

Fiefdom of Xiang) in the capital Kaifeng (開封) was a famous market, the descriptions of which can be seen in many written records. One literary sketch gave an outline of the market aspect of this temple: “[The Xiangguo Temple] is a tile market (瓦市, trading markets in an open space of a city where the ground was usually covered with broken tiles). Monks’ dormitories scattered [in the temple], and the middle yard with the passageways on the two sides could contain ten thousand people. All the travelling merchants and trading businesses gathered here. [People from] four directions who came to the Capital to sell [their own] commodities or to sell commodities of others [as a second-hand seller] had to [do their business] through this market.”[110] A more detailed description of this temple-market can be seen in *A Dream of Flowers in the Eastern Capital* (東京夢華錄), a literary sketch recording the situations of Capital Kaifeng between 1102 and 1125, composed by Meng Yuanlao (孟元老) in year 1147.[111] Meng wrote that: “The Xiangguo Temple opened five times every months, and ten thousand people traded in it. Up from the great entrance gate were all kinds of birds, cats and dogs, as well as rare birds and animals with nothing lacking. Between the second and the third gate were all everyday utilities, and in the courtyard, there were colorful screens, open air

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[110] *Yanyi yimou lu* 燕翼貽謀錄 (Records of Strategy Bequeathed by Swallow Wings), Wang Yong 王栐 (Song Dynasty), as in *Tang-Song shiliao biji congkan* 唐宋史料筆記叢刊, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1981, vol. 2, p.20: “乃瓦市也，僧房散處，而中庭兩廡可容萬人，凡商旅交易，皆萃其中，四方趨京師以貨物求售、轉售他物者，必由於此。”

[111] A detailed study of this literary sketch has been done by Stephen H. West in “The Interpretation of A Dream – The Sources, Evaluation, and Influence of the ‘Dongjing Meng Hua Lu,” *Toung Pao*71 (1-3): pp.63-108. See also see Alexander C. Soper, “Hsiang-Kuo-ssu, An Imperial Temple of Northern Sung,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (68): pp. 19-45, for a more detailed study of the Xiangguo Temple.

rooms and booths where [sellers] were selling reed mats, bamboo mats, folding screens, toiletries, saddles, bows and arrows, seasonal fruits and dried foods…"[112] This kind of temple-market was a common sight in Song cities. The Great Benevolence Temple (大慈寺) in Chengdu (成都) was recorded to "have many people gathered and hundreds sorts of commodities were sold there".[113] In Kaiyuan Temple (開元寺) of Shaoxing prefecture (紹興府), "Traders from the nearby ten or so prefectures and from abroad gathered there. Their jade wares, silks, pearls, rhinoceros horns, famous perfumes, precious medicines as well as valuable silks, lacquered or cane-made articles were piled up as mountains and clouds…"[114] Jingyan Chan Temple (精嚴禪寺) in Jiahe prefecture (嘉禾) of Hunan (湖南) was an example of how Buddhist monasteries merged with a nearby market: "The temple was on the side of a market, thus the temple itself became a market. Monks lived in the market, and thus they also engaged in market business. After this has been practiced for a long time, [the market] became prosperous. Houses were divided into a hundred places [as shops], and [monks] who engaged in it counted up to several

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[112] *Dongjing menghua lu* 東京夢華錄 (A Dream of Flowers in the Eastern Capital), Meng Yuanlao 孟元老 (Song dynasty), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982, vol. 3, pp.88-89: "The Trading of Ten Thousand People in the Monastery of the Fiefdom of Xiang" 相國寺內萬姓交易: "國寺每月五次開放，萬姓交易，大三門上皆是飛禽貓犬之類，珍禽奇獸，無所不有，第二、三門皆動用什物，庭中設彩幕露屋，義鋪賣蒲合、草席、屏帷、洗漱、鞍轡、弓劍、時果、臘脯之類……"

[113] *Tieweishan congtan* 鐵圍山叢談 (Talks on Tiewei Mountain), Cai Tao 蔡絛 (Song dynasty), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1983(1997), vol. 6, p.104:"歲以天中重陽時開大慈寺，多聚人物，出百貨。"

[114] *Jiatai guiji zhi* 嘉泰會稽志 (Gazetteer of Guiji in Jiatai Period), Beijing: Zhonghuashuju , 1990, vol. 7, p.6822: "方十數郡及海外商賈皆集玉帛、珠犀、名香珍藥、組繡罪藤之器，山積雲委，眩耀人目，法書名畫，鐘鼎彝器，玩好奇物亦間出焉，士大夫以為可配成都藥市。"

hundred."[115] Not only did monasteries act as markets, but monastics were also engaged in commercial activities, and this seems to have been well accepted by people in the Song dynasty. A literary sketch recorded that in Guangnan Circuit (廣南路, today's southern part of Guangdong 廣東), "the custom is that most of those who took part in trading business in markets were monks. They all became rich from the business, and according to the tradition they would have families. So many local women married with [these] monks."[116] We should be able to find more evidence of monastic engagement in commercial activities if we have a more thorough survey of local gazetteers and literati jottings.

The existence of these temple-markets could bring a win-win outcome to those who participated in them. The monasteries made income by renting out booths, shops or even warehouses to merchants, and sometime they also sold their own products there. Local governments collected commercial taxes from the transactions in the market, as well as rental taxes. The thriving markets were surely welcomed by merchants, and local residents could also consume conveniently.

Besides collecting agricultural and commercial taxes from Buddhist monasteries, another way the state profited economically from Buddhism was through the selling of

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[115] *Jiahe jinshi zhi* 嘉禾金石志 (Records of [Inscriptions on] Metal and Stone in the Period of Jiahe), as preserved in *New Collection of Historical Materials of Stone Inscriptions* 石刻史料新編, Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, p.6933, "Records of Jingyan Chan Temple" 精嚴禪寺記: "寺鄰於市，寺亦為市，僧居於市，僧亦為市，既為而久，久則盛，其分房裂戶百所，而為之徒者且數百人。"

[116] *Jilei bian* 雞肋編 (Collection of Odds and Ends), Zhuang Chuo 莊綽 (circa 1120s), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1983, middle vol (卷中), p.65: "廣南風俗, 市井坐估，多僧人為之，率皆致富，又例有室家，故其婦女多嫁於僧。"

monastic certificates. Sales of certificates started in the Tang dynasty, but it was in the Song dynasty that the scale of such sales largely expanded and even became an important source for the state revenue. Especially since the time of Emperor Shenzong (宋神宗, 1048-1085 CE), sales of certificates has become a frequently used governmental financing tool. For the period between year 1056 and 1169, the records for the number of certificates sold and the state income got from such sales could be find in materials such as *Continued Long Collection of Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* (續資治通鑒長編), *Collection of the Important Records of Song Dynasty* (宋會要), *Song History* (宋史), *Miscellaneous Records of the Court and Society* (朝野雜記), and other works. Wang Shengduo gathered these statistics together in his book *History of Governmental Financing of Northern and Southern Song Dynasties*, from which we can see that during this period, the lowest yearly sale of certificates was 4,196 items in 1081, and the highest was an astonishing 30,000 in 1109. On average, every year 10,500 certificates were sold. The price for each certificate ranged from 120,000 to 1,500,000 cash in different years, with an average price of 369,000 cash. This means that on average a yearly income of 3,874,500,000 cash was generated by selling certificates.[117] If the significance of this number is still not clear, we can compare it with the amount of currency issued every year. The average coin cash issued yearly during the same period was 2,200,000,000, and

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[117] Wang Shengduo 汪聖鐸, *Fiscal History of the Two Song Dynasties* 兩宋財政史, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1995, pp.741-743; Zhang Wen 張文, "Analysis of the Inflation Problem in Song Dynasty" 宋代通貨膨脹問題辨析, *Academic Journal of Southwestern Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences)* 西南師範大學學報(人文社科版), 2000(01),vol.26, p.120.

paper currency issued was around 8,000,000,000 per year.[118] We can see that the certificates sold every year counted almost 25 percent of the currency.

Certificates were directly used in charity works and infrastructure projects of local governments. For example, in year 1067, when some prefectures in Shaanxi (陝西) was hit by frost damage and drought, Emperor Yingzong (宋英宗, r. 1063-1067 CE) bestowed the governor with certificates to buy rice.[119] In year 1068, the governor of Eastern Guangnan (廣南東路) made the appeal for monastic certificates, so that he could pay construction labourers for the city wall by selling them. The emperor agreed to give him 500 certificates.[120] The most well-known case was that of the famous scholar, writer, poet and official Su Shi (蘇軾, 1037-1101CE), whose appeals for certificates were preserved in his collected works. In year 1071, Su Shi was appointed to be the prefect of Hangzhou. By that time, half of the West Lake was silted up, which badly affected the agriculture and everyday life for people around the area. Su Shi made an appeal to the emperor for one hundred monastic certificates. He projected that with the certificates, he could hire labourers to dredge the lake, and at the same time, those labourers would be able to live through the time of famine by working for the project.[121] His appeal was approved. With

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[118] Wang Shengduo 汪聖鐸, 1995, p.759.

[119] *Song shi* 宋史, vol.13, p.267. “Biography of Emperor Shenzong” 神宗本紀: “[英宗治平四年(1067)] 給陝西轉運使僧牒，令糴穀賑霜旱州縣。”

[120] *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿,vol.190, p.28 in no.9 of the section “Areas” 方域九: “神宗熙甯元年(1068)，廣南東路轉運使王靖乞請祠部給度牒，付經略司出賣，以雇民工築城，詔給五百道”; *Song shi* 宋史, vol.15, p.286, “Biography of Emperor Shenzong” 神宗本紀：“[神宗熙寧七年(1074)八月丁丑]，賜環慶安撫司度僧牒，以募粟振漢番饑民。”

[121] *Su Dongpo quanji* 蘇東坡全集 (Complete Collection of Su Dongpo), Su Shi 蘇軾

the one hundred certificates, each of which was worth one thousand *dou* of rice at that period, Su Shi was able to have the West Lake dredged.

In 1089, Su Shi took office in Hangzhou for the second time. Soon he encountered severe flood which was followed by drought. He repeatedly asked for assistance from the court, requesting that taxes to be reduced for the area, and monastic certificates to be bestowed. The state sent out the certificates, but since at the same time Huainan Circuit (淮南路) was also suffering disasters, the official Ye Wensao (葉溫叟) who was in charge only distributed 30 certificates to Hangzhou. This was far from enough for the disaster-relief projects in Hangzhou. Su Shi thus submitted a memo titled "On the Unfairness of the Distribution of Monastic Certificates by Ye Wensao",[122] and at last received one hundred more certificates which helped the area to survive the disasters.

The convenience of using certificates as state assistance to local governments or military actions is obvious. Since the same certificates could be sold at every region in the country, the state no longer needed to transport large amount of rice, grains or coins to the area in need of support. As in the case of Su Shi, just a few hundred certificate papers were enough to pay for the dredging project and disaster-relief works. This saved significant cost generated by transportation: one thousand copper cash weighted around 2.5 kilograms, and the price of one certificate was more than 130 thousands copper cash,

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(1037-1101 CE), Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1986(1991), Section of Court Memorials, vol.7, "Appeal for the Bestowal of Monastic Certificates for the Dredging of West Lake in Hangzhou" 杭州乞度牒開西湖狀, p.479.

[122] *Su Dongpo quanji* 蘇東坡全集, Section of Court Memorials, vol.7, "Appeal for Relieve The Seven Prefecture of Western Zhejiang from Disaster" 乞賑濟浙西七州狀, p.470; "On the On the Unfairness of the Distribution of Monastic Certificates by Ye Wensao"論葉溫叟分擘度牒不公狀, p.477.

this means one of this paper certificates could substitute for at least 325 kg of copper coins.

In certain sense, it can be said that monastic certificates acted as a governmental security in the Song dynasty. And one of the advantages of this monastic "security" was that the state government needed not to back up its issue with any sort of capitals or reserves. The existence of Buddhist monasteries in the country itself and people's belief in Buddhism to some degree granted the value of the certificates. In other words, a monastic certificate was a security the credit of which was provided by Buddhism, but the income from which was used by the government. This was really a smart mechanism. Even in the time when the certificates were hard to sell out, local governments could always force Buddhist monasteries to buy it using rice or cash. The official and scholar Zhen Dexiu (真德秀, 1178-1235 CE) recorded such cases in the Circuit of Jinhunan (荊湖南路): "Since year 1218, every year [the government ordered the monasteries] to submit rice in trading for certificates, and the number is already uncountable. When rice is insufficient, cash was ordered to submit. Monasteries that got ruined due to this were no single case…"[123]

Song dynasty was a period when the economic and financial potential of Buddhism was

[123] *Xishan xiansheng zhenwenzhenggong ji* 西山先生真文忠公文集 (Collection of Sir Zhen Wenzhong Master of the West Mountain), Zhen, Dexiu 真德秀 (1178-1235 CE), Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1937, vol.17, pp.283-284: "Appeal to the Ministry to Exempt the Sending of Monastic Certificates" 申尚書省乞免降度牒狀："自嘉定十一年以來，逐歲敷抑度牒令納米，其數己不可勝計，納米不足又令納錢，寺觀緣此倒敗者非一，蓋有一、二年敷下度牒，至今監錢未足者。"

recognized and effectively utilized by the state and local government, while Buddhist monasteries and monastics themselves also took an active role in the pro-commerce social environment. But with the end of Song dynasty, the economically active side of Buddhism also ceased to develop continuously. We will see in next chapter that under a different ruling philosophy, Buddhist monastic economy in Ming dynasty took on another face.

CHAPTER IV

Ming Dynasty: State, Local Elites, and Monasteries

The Ming state adopted a different ruling philosophy than the Song state. While pro-commerce Song state placed more emphasis on economic affairs in its ruling, at the beginning of Ming dynasty, the emperor's ideal was to establish a more stable state where every social stratum could be closely controlled by the state. But ironically, it was under such ruling philosophy that the state gradually lost its control on the local level due to the lack of more careful consideration of the economic reality of society, while the local elites were capable of taking the advantage of their privileges to accumulate wealth and increase their power. In this chapter, we will see that the Buddhist monastic economy was largely weakened under such political and social environment. They had to first undergo the state's restraints and amalgamation aimed at secluding Buddhism within their walls during the early Ming period, and then in the mid Ming, the encroachment of land estates by local elites who were becoming more and more powerful. Sinuated between the power of the state and local elites, Buddhist monastic economy in Ming dynasty took a more passive role and they were not able to engage as actively in economic activities as in previous dynasties.

The founder of Ming dynasty, Emperor Taizu (明太祖, r.1368-1398CE) seems to have been quite familiar with the teachings of Buddhism, and he himself composed eighty prefaces, treatises, poems and odes on Buddhism like "Treatises on the Benefits of

Buddhism", "Preface for Heart Sutra", "Treatise on the Three Teachings" and so on, which were included in the *Dharma-Guarding Collections of the Emperor* (禦制護法集).[124] Besides, he also compiled the volume of *Collected Commentaries for Diamond Sutra* (集注金剛經). The emperor's intention to protect and promote Buddhism can be detected from these writings. And the way he chose to "protect" Buddhism was to implement a strict separation between the monastics and lay-people, so that monastics could be beyond corruption, and serve to support the stability of the state through its teachings. Emperor Taizu attempted to use state power to create a monastic world comparatively isolated from society and to prevent interaction between the two, which potentially would contaminate the purity of the monastic world.

In 1391, Emperor Taizu promulgated *Postings for the Declaration on Buddhism (*申明佛教榜冊),[125] and in 1394, he again issued the *Posted Regulations for Monastics and Buddhism* (榜示僧教條例)[126] which summarized the early-Ming policies regarding Buddhism. The regulations on the one hand supported Buddhism economically: unlike in the Song dynasty when monastic certificates were sold at a considerable price, legal ordination with an official certificate was now free of charge; imperially bestowed lands were exempted from all taxes, and other monastic lands were also exempted from miscellaneous taxes; monastics were exempted from labour-tax (免丁錢) which was collected in the Song dynasty, and it also banned the imposition of corvée labour upon

[124] A list of the writings in the collection is recorded in *Shishi jigulue xuji* 釋氏稽古略續集 (Continued Collection of Ancient Buddhist Works), T49.2038.939a22-b17.
[125] Its content is recorded in *Shishi jigulue xuji* 釋氏稽古略續集, T49.2038.936a04-c13.
[126] Ibid, T49.2038.938b18-c17.

monastics. Furthermore, to protect the land property of monasteries, Emperor Taizu prohibited people from buying or selling land which belonged to monasteries, but monasteries were not banned from buying land.

But accompanying these favours was the strict control of monastic groups. According to the *Posted Regulations for Monastics and Buddhism*, monastics must live together in monasteries, those who dared to live in or enter towns and villages were faced with the sentence of execution. Monastics were not allowed to interact with local officials, and lay people including intellectuals (秀才) were also banned from entering monasteries and eating with monastics without good reason; those who violated these rules were to be punished.

The size and number of monasteries and monastics was also strictly limited in the early Ming period. Emperor Taizu ordered the reorganization of the monasteries empire-wide. Small temples with less than twenty monastics were required to merge with large monasteries,[127] and each province, prefecture and town could only keep one large monastery with monastics living collectively.[128] Unlike state policies in the later period of the Ming dynasty which were often unable to be enforced on local level, this edict of the

[127] *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵刹志 (Gazetteer of Buddhist Temples in Jinling), Ge Yinliang 葛寅亮 (1570-1646 CE), as preserved in *Continued Collection of the Complete Books of Four Categories* 續修四庫全書 vol.0718 and 0719, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002, fas.2, "Collection of Emperors" 欽錄集, p.467: "凡僧之處於市者，其數照《歸併條例》，務要三十人以上聚成一寺。二十人以下者，悉令歸併。其寺宇聽僧折改，併入大寺。如所在官司，有將寺沒官，及改充別用者，即以贓論。"

[128] *Ming shi* 明史 (History of Ming), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1974, vol.74, p.1818, "Records of Governmental Positions no.3" 職官志三 : "凡各府州縣寺觀，但存寬大者一所，併居之。凡僧道，府不得過四十人，州三十人，縣二十人。民年非四十以上，女年非五十以上者，不得出家。"

founder Emperor to merge monasteries seemed to have been implemented seriously. For example, in Fujian Province (福建), the town of Fuan (福安縣) originally had thirty-two temples. Due to the edict, twenty-six of them were merged with the remaining six larger monasteries.[129] The county of Jianan (建安縣) originally had sixty-nine temples, and sixty-five of them were amalgamated by the five larger monasteries.[130] In Gusu (姑蘇, today's Suzhou 蘇州), where originally 246 temples existed, only four were retained after the amalgamation.[131] And after the forced merger, many of the evacuated temples gradually decayed and ruined. (Though after mid-Ming dynasty when the sale of monastic certificates started, those ruined temples were able to be restored to some degree.)

While ordination was free of charge, a strict examination system was set for the selection of qualified monastics, and the number of monastics was clearly limited. Only once every three years, was legal ordination given to those who passed the exams.[132] In 1373, Emperor Taizu ordered that women could leave home and become monastics only after the age of forty, and in 1394, he again regulated that men under the age of twenty were not allowed to become monks. Monasteries were strictly prohibited from recruiting children as novices. The abbot who dared to accept children in his monastery would be

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[129] *Bamin tongzhi* 八閩通志 (Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Eight Min Prefectures), Huang Zhongzhao 黄仲昭 (1435-1508 CE), Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2006, vol. 79, pp.1232-1234.
[130] *Bamin tongzhi* 八閩通志, vol.76, pp.1129-1132.
[131] T'ien Ju-K'ang, "The Decadence of Buddhist Temples in Fukien in Late Ming and Early Qing", In *Development and decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th centuries*, edited by Eduard B. Vermeer, Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1990, p.88.
[132] See *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵刹志, fas.2, p.459.

sentenced to death, and the parents of children would be exiled to borders.[133]

Emperor Taizong (明太宗, r.1402-1424 CE) continued to limit the size of the saṃgha. In 1418, he made the edict that "for those who want to be Buddhist and Taoist monastics, in every province the number should not exceed forty, in every prefecture not to exceed thirty, in each county not to exceed twenty," and ordination was carried out only every six years.[134] Thus the total number of monastics in the early Ming was limited to only thirty-six to thirty-seven thousand.[135] This number then became the standard quota of monastics. For example, in 1427, Emperor Xuanzong (明宣宗, r.1425-1435 CE) commanded the return of all the novices who "were accepted out of the standard quota and are not versed in scripture," and even "those who are within the standard quota should wait for five years and then take exams."[136] In 1461, the Ministry of Rites decided that "Buddhist and Taoist monastics are to be ordained in accordance with the standard quota set by Emperor Taizong."[137] And in 1488, the Ministry of Rites again made the decision to "stop the once-in-ten-year ordination to wait till the number of monastics

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133 *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵刹志, fas.2, p.468.

134 *Ming Taizong shilu* 明太宗實錄 (Veritable Record of Ming Taizong), Taipei: zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1962, vol. 205, p.2109: "[永樂十六年(1418)十月]今後願為僧、道者，府不過四十人，州不過三十人，縣不過二十人。"

135 *Ming Xiaozong shilu* 明孝宗實錄 (Veritable Record of Ming Xiaozong), Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1962, vol. 112, p.2043: "概天下計之，其請給者亦不過三萬六千餘名。"

136 *Ming Xuanzong shilu* 明宣宗實錄 (Veritable Record of Ming Xuanzong), Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1962, vol. 34, p.0866: "[宣德二年(1427)十二月] 天下僧道行童赴京請給度牒者多系額外濫收、且不通經典者多，請如例悉遣歸；"若系額內之數，亦待五年考試給與。從之。"

137 *Ming Yingzong shilu* 明英宗實錄 (Veritable Record of Ming Yingzong), Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1962, vol. 64, p.1220: "[正統五年(1461)二月]行在禮部議准，僧、道依太宗欽定額數給度。"

reduced below the standard quota."[138]

While reducing the number of legally ordained monastics, privately ordained monastics were also punished by early emperors of Ming dynasty. To root out private and unregistered ordination, the state issued *Booklet for Public Announcement* (周知板冊). Emperor Taizu ordered the Central Buddhist Registry (僧錄司) in the Capital to record the each monastic's name, hometown, age, lay name, sex, time of being a novice, original monastery, time of going forth, number of one's monastic certificate, name of one's father, brothers and ordination master, and composed these data into the *Booklet for Public Announcement*, copies of which were sent out to every monastery in the empire. When an itinerant monk arrived at any temple, the temple would first verify his identity with the data on the booklet; if any information he provided was different from the booklet, he would be arrested and sent to the government for punishment.[139] Accompanying the booklet was the *Catalogue of Monasteries*. The Monastic Registrar Office was asked to number and catalogue all temples across the country, including detailed information of each temple's location, founding dynasty, founder abbot and/or the founding sponsor's name, roster of all current monastics and so on. The major purpose of composing the booklet and catalogue apparently was to eliminate any privately-ordained monastic and any privately-built monastery.

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[138] *Ming Xiaozong shilu* 明孝宗實錄, vol. 10, p.0231: "[弘治元年（1488 年）閏正月]禮部議准，將十年一度之例停止，待額數不足之日，所在官司照額起送給度。"
[139] See *Shishi jigulue xuji* 釋氏稽古略續集, T 49.2038.925b03-05: "命僧、道錄司造《周知冊》，頒行天下寺觀。凡遇僧、道到處，即與對冊，其父母籍，告度月日。如冊不同，即為偽僧"; T49.2038.937b11-b13: "試經給僧度牒，敕僧錄司，行移天下僧司，造僧籍冊，刊佈寺院，互相周知，名為《周知板冊》。"

Other emperors in the early Ming also paid serious attention to the matter of private ordination. In 1407, Emperor Taizong registered one thousand and eight hundred privately ordained monks as soldiers and exiled them to the border areas of Liaodong (遼東) and Gansu (甘肅).[140] In 1408, he again ordered that "illegally ordained monastics as well as their fathers and brothers be sent as labourers to Mount Wutai (五臺山), to work on the field for people or herd horses all day long."[141] In 1433, Emperor Xuanzong promulgated an edit to send any privately-ordained monastic back to their hometown and punish them according to the law."[142]

Another new institution created by Emperor Taizu was to divide Buddhist monastics into three different categories: Chan monastics (禪僧), lecturing monastics (講僧) and teaching monastics (教僧). Each category of monastics should master the practices of his own category, and not carry out the practices of the others.[143] Thus only the teaching monastics would have the chance to enter a normal household to provide them with ritual services. Moreover, the price of different sort of ritual services was also set out in detail by Emperor Taizu.[144]

The intention of Taizu's measures above was to clearly separate monastic world

[140] *Ming Taizong shilu* 明太宗實錄, vol. 63, p.0904: "[永樂五年(1407)正月]私披剃為僧、赴京冒請度牒者一千八百餘人，悉付兵部編軍籍，發戍遼東、甘肅。"
[141] *Ming Taizong shilu* 明太宗實錄, vol. 80, p.1066: "命非法出家者並其父、兄送京師，發五臺山輸作，畢日就北京為民種田及盧龍牧馬。寺主僧擅容留者，亦發北京為民種田。"
[142] *Ming Xuanzong shilu* 明宣宗實錄, vol. 100, p.2252: "[宣德八年(1433)三月,宣宗令]各處令關津但遇（私自）削髮之人，捕送原籍，治罪如律。"
[143] *Shishi jigulue xuji* 釋氏稽古略續集, T49.2038.936a20-21: "理當清其事而成其宗。令一出禪者禪。講者講。瑜伽者瑜伽。各承宗派。"
[144] Ibid, T49.2038.936b21-26.

from secular society. Buddhism could serve the state, if well regulated. These policies on the one hand provided Buddhist monastics with certain economic resources and privileges–such as the bestowal of land, exemption of labour duties, and free monastic certificates, which would enable them to support themselves, while on the other hand it strictly kept the size of the monastic group under control. The ideal result would be a small group of well-trained monastics in each county, who passed strict examination and lived in accordance with *vinaya* and state regulations as models of high morality and self-discipline, keeping a distance from the worldly affairs of society, and whose conduct assisted government in preaching morality to the masses. They should not have the chance of growing uncontrollably like in the time of the Southern and Northern dynasties, or becoming powerful land holders like in the Tang dynasty, or engaging actively in worldly commercial activities like in the Song dynasty. Instead, they were designed to keep the purity and serenity of the religion, stay within their compounds and come out only when called for ritual services, pursuing no material gain except for those necessary for their normal living expenses.

Such a blueprint soon proved to be impossible to implement in the face of social and economic reality. The existence of monastics, and even the examination system itself, soon caused problems to the life of normal people. In the early period of Ming dynasty when the examination system was in practice and certificates were only issued in the Capital, thousands of novice applicants would gather in there during the year of examination. At the same time, large number of monastics who already obtained certificates also chose to stay in the Capital. The sudden increase of population in the

Capital caused problems of the commodity prices as well as public security. The writer of the *Veritable Record of Ming Yingzong* criticized these novices and monastics as "those [among them] that become evil, or become robbers and rebels are innumerable."[145] In 1452, some officials pointed out that those Buddhist and Taoist monastics who "stay stealthily in the Capital amounted to tens of thousands. Though they are not fed by the government, the sudden increase of the price of rice is due to their eating without producing."[146] A similar issue appeared again in 1474, when an official argued that "if ordination is carried out again, then Buddhists and Taoists under heaven would gather in the Capital, and make the rice price even more expensive."[147]

The standard quota of monastics was exceeded after only a few decades, and the number of monastics increased quickly especially after 1451, when the sale of monastic certificates was started in order to pay military expenses and for disaster relief. As may be expected, many unqualified people with the purpose of escaping from labour duties could now manage to buy a monastic certificate. In 1466 alone, more than 132,000 novices were given full ordination.[148] The number of legally ordained monastics (including both Taoists and Buddhists) was recorded to be around 350,000 to 370,000 in 1496, much

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145 *Ming Yingzong shilu* 明英宗實錄, vol. 210, p.4522: "僧道集京師者數萬人……為奸、為盜、為惡逆者，殆不可勝數。"

146 *Ming Yingzong shilu* 明英宗實錄, vol. 221, p.4776: "[景泰三年（1452 年）閏九月] 僧道潛住京師，動以萬計，雖不費官糧，而米價湧貴，實由其冗食所致。"

147 *Ming Xianzong shilu* 明憲宗實錄 (Veritable Record of Ming Xianzong), Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishiyuyan yanjiusuo , 1962, vol. 129, p.2454: "[成化十年（1474 年）六月]京城內外米價騰湧，民食孔艱。若複行給度，則天下僧、道紛集京師，米價益貴。"

148 *Ming Xianzong shilu* 明憲宗實錄, vol. 120, p.2310: "成化二年(1466)閏三月, 額外給度僧、道十五歲以上者五萬名，一年所度計十三萬二千二百餘人。"

more than the standard set by Emperor Taizong eighty years ago. And when it came to the mid-Ming, the examination system set one and a half century ago no longer seemed to be important. In 1539, Emperor Shizong (明世宗, r. 1521-1566 CE) ordered all novices to pay for certificates; since then, to buy certificate became the standard way of getting ordination, and the exam system became obsolete.[149] The number of monastics was not kept on the level as Emperor Taizu and Emperor Taizong had planned. In comparison, the number of monastics recorded in the Northern Song was 458,000, in the Southern Song 200,000, and in the Yuan dynasty 213,000. The difference between the number of Ming monastics and those of previous dynasties was not quite significant.

The number of privately ordained monastics also increased rapidly. Although Emperor Taizu clearly prohibited such practices, it seems that later governments did not have enough capability or lack the interest to actually see to the problem, especially after mid-Ming. In 1449, certain official submitted a memorial to Emperor Daizong (明代宗, r.1449-1457CE) that illegally-ordained monastics had accumulated to several millions. This might be somewhat exaggerated, but nonetheless reflected the popularity of private ordination. The Emperor thus ordered to "assemble officials to discuss the problem", but no action was recorded as having been taken. In 1453 again, an official suggested having monastics return to normal life, and Emperor Daizong ordered the relevant ministries to discuss it carefully and submit to him the decision, but again, no result could be seen.[150]

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[149] For a more detailed study on the monastic certificates of Ming dynasty, see Zhao Yifeng 趙軼峰, "The Transformation in the Institution of Monastic Certificates of Ming dynasty" 明代僧道度牒制度的變遷, *Ancient Civilization* 古代文明, 2008(02), pp.72-89.

[150] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 明英宗實錄, vol. 183, p.3583: "[正統十四年(1449)九月]修盖

Almost the same thing as the above happened again and again in 1465 during the time of Emperor Xianzong (明憲宗, r.1464-1487 CE), in 1488 and 1495 during the time of Emperor Xiaozong (明孝宗, r.1487-1505 CE), but without exception, no real action was taken. And we see Emperor Xiaozong's last word on this issue, "just let it be."[151] Early emperors' measures regarding Buddhism were proved unsuccessful in later generations, and as Brook noticed in his study of the Ming state, later emperors also gradually lost interest in regulating Buddhism. He cited a local gazetteer which recorded a Circuit Censor who declared that all edicts regarding Buddhist institutions and personnel issued between 1373 and 1455 were being disregarded in Fujian by 1530.[152]

One important factor for the emperors' lack of interest in monastic matters may be due to the low effectiveness of the state policies. Except for Emperor Taizu and Taizong, the later emperors often found it difficult to have their edicts implemented on the ground. The power of the local gentry class started to rise since mid-Ming dynasty, their scholar-official spokesmen in the government now represented their interests, not the interest of the emperor or the state.

寺觀遍滿京師，京師出家者累千百萬……當令還俗生理……[代宗令]會官議之"; vol. 228, p.4985: "[景泰四年(1453)四月] 奏再通行天下，凡無度牒者即令還俗", "[代宗]命所司詳議以聞。"

151 *Ming Xianzong shilu* 明憲宗實錄, vol. 14, p.0308: "成化元年(1465)二月，奏請私自簪剃者勒令還俗，解發原籍當差", 憲宗命"下所司議之"; *Ming Xiaozong shilu* 明孝宗實錄, vol.10, p.0210, vol.14, pp.0352-0353 and vol.106, p.1930&p.1935: "弘治元年(1488)閏正月，因左都禦史馬文升之疏，禮部奏准，無度牒僧行道童發回當差"；五月，"工科給事中夏昂疏稱，今既數月，未見施行"；八年十一月，"禮部尚書倪嶽等奏請禁約請給"，"其潛住京師寺、觀，請悉詔還原籍當差，違者發邊衛充軍"。孝宗令"姑已之。"

152 Brook, Timothy, *The Chinese State in Ming Society*, London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005. p.152.

The ideal structure of the state, as originally designed by Emperor Taizu, was a stable agricultural society without much interaction between different social classes and regions. Peasants should diligently work on their field, supervised by local leaders who took charge of the administration tasks on the ground. Scholar officials should uphold the moral standard and do their best to the wellbeing of the state, while limited Buddhists assisted the state moralization from another aspect.

The operation of Ming state based upon such ideal was quite different from that of the Song dynasty. The prior attention of the Song state was given to economic and fiscal operation of the society. The state was earnest in gathering economic data and drawing up policies in accordance with the economic reality. And it turns out to be the dynasty in Chinese history which put the most attention in the formulation of economic laws. As we have discussed in previous chapter, almost 70% of the state revenue of Song dynasty was from non-agricultural taxes. Without careful studies, analysis and management of the commercial activities of society, it would be impossible to successfully channel from commerce and industry the major portion of the state revenue while keeping the economic prosperity of society. Besides, the salary of Song governmental officials was the highest among all the dynasties in Chinese history.[153] Under such a political environment, the interests of local officials and the state were comparatively kept on parallel lines: to promote commerce and industry and to increase the state revenue.

Unlike the Song dynasty, the major revenue of the Ming state went backward to

[153] For a more detailed study on the salary of Song officials, see Huang Huixian 黃惠賢 and Chen Feng 陳鋒, *History of the Institution of Official Salary in China* 中國俸祿制度史, Wuhan: Wuhan University, 1996, pp.241-308.

rely on agricultural taxes, despite the fact that commerce was developing fast on the ground. Emperor Taizu's ideal did not take into consideration of the commercial development of society. Though it might have worked at the beginning of the dynasty when society was in a process of restoration from wars, after a period of development, the comparatively free market promoted the unequal distribution of land. As pointed out by Timothy Brook, since the agricultural taxation system still assumed an even distribution of land, local gentry soon discovered their advantages in accumulating land due to their exemption from taxes from the offices they held or their examination degree, and such accumulation became more and more obvious since mid-Ming period.[154] In the sector of commerce and industry, the dominance was also soon gained by the elite class with their accumulated capitals. The very low commercial taxes, —thanks to the lack of effective state control of the commerce and industries—, largely helped the elite class to achieve success there. The result was that whenever the state tried to increase the inappropriately low commercial taxes to better the state revenue, it would encounter severe opposition from the gentry class, whose spokesmen were officials in the government. Besides, in sharp contrast with the Song dynasty, the Ming dynasty is well-known for the low salary for governmental officials, which further made the loyal attachment to office-holding itself unprofitable.[155] The divergence between the interests of scholar officials who also belonged to the gentry class resulted in the very low effectiveness of state policies.

Under such conditions, the power that Buddhism often had to deal with was the

[154] Brook, Timothy, *Praying for Power Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in late-Ming*, Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, 1993, p. 314.
[155] For a detailed study on the low salary of Ming governmental officials, see Huang Huixian 黃惠賢 and Chen Feng 陳鋒, 1996, pp. 493-503.

powerful local scholar–official/gentry class who might compete with them for economic resources, not a government representing the state which assumed the role of supervision. The local records of mid-Ming period regarding Buddhist monasteries in Nanjing and Fujian will help us to look more closely into the economic state of Buddhist monasteries under the influences of local scholar-official/gentry class.

Since Nanjing was the first Capital of Ming dynasty, several monasteries there as imperially-sponsored temples enjoyed generous imperial bestowals from Emperor Taizu. These eight great temples (Linggu Temple 靈穀寺, Tianjie Temple 天界寺, Baoen Temple 報恩寺, Qixia Temple 棲霞寺, Jiming Temple 雞鳴寺, Jinghai Temple 靜海寺, Nengren Temple 能仁寺, Honghai Temple 弘海寺) not only avoided the early Ming amalgamation, but also enlarged and were economically supported by the state. Based upon the records in the *Gazetteer of Jinling Buddhist Monasteries* (金陵梵刹志, compiled by Ge Yinliang 葛寅亮 in 1607), Emperor Taizu's accumulative bestowal to the eight major monasteries in Nanjing amounted to five hundred *qing*, and such favor continued by later emperors.[156] Moreover, such bestowed lands were exempted from taxation by Emperor Taizu.

As always, land was the major economic resource for these monasteries. Generally they rented out the land to peasant tenants. The rental was set according to the level of the land. According to a report by the abbot of Tianjie Temple in 1385, the rental

[156] He Xiaorong 何孝榮, *Studies on Temples in Nanjing in Ming Dynasty* 明代南京寺院研究, Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2000, p. 260.

for each *mu* (畝, approx.614-884 square metres[157]) of upper level monastic land was 7.9 *dou* (鬥, approx.9.87 litres[158]) middle level was 7.5 *dou*, and lower level 7.2 *dou*.[159] Compare with normal governmental land whose rental was usually three to four *dou*, the rental of these temples was quite high, equal to the price of private land rental and the highest level of governmental land.[160] In the early period of Ming dynasty, these great temples enjoyed such high rental income with exemption of taxes and labour duties.

In 1421, Emperor Chengzu (明成祖) moved the Capital from Nanjing to Beijing, and these temples started to lose direct protection from the emperor. After mid-Ming dynasty, the protection those temples got from the emperor further weakened, and their lands bestowed by Emperor Taizu were started to be taxed by local government. The first case of such taxation was around 1470s. Because of the flood disaster in Hangzhou and Suzhou, the Circuit Censor proposed that the eight great temples should submit two *sheng* (升, approx.0.987 litre[161]) rice per *mu* of their bestowed land for disaster relief. This was approved by the court.[162] Then certain local officials even took the opportunity to tax

[157] Wilkinson, 2000, p. 236 & p. 238.
[158] Ibid, p. 238
[159] *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵刹志, fas.2, p.459.
[160] In 1388, Emperor Taizu set the rental of superior governmental land in Zhejiang and the Capital at four *dou*, and the rental for land in Jiangxi was set at three *dou*. See *Ming Taizu shilu* 明太祖實錄 (Veritable Record of Ming Taizu), Taipei: zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1962, vol. 190, p.2875: "兩浙及京畿土壤饒沃者輸四鬥，江西郡縣地土頗磽瘠者只輸三鬥，著為令。"
[161] Wilkinson, 2000, p. 238.
[162] *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵刹志, fas. 50, "Regulations on the Rental Quota of Individual Temples" 各寺租額條例條約, p.73, "Poster of Yingtianfu on the Investigation and Exemption of the tax Quotas on Shangyuan Temple" 應天府查免上元縣雜派貼文

more than the court required. For example, Shangyuan Temple possessed 2576 *mu* of land and thus should submit 50.5 *shi* (石, approx. 70.8kg[163]) of rice, but the taxer of the county where the land was located set the quota to 53.5 *shi* and without other means, the temple had to submit the amount as required.[164]

Although the court pointed out that the case under this special situation "should not become a regular practice", similar things started to happen again and again from then on. The bestowed lands of these temples were continuously required to submit rice in later generations, at the beginning only in time of disaster, but later on they were even started to be taxed as lands of normal households. By the end of fifteenth century during the time of Emperor Xiaozong because of the drought in Shaanxi (陝西), the eight great temples were again required to submit two sheng of rice per mu of land, and since this time, such practice was "set to be the regular practice".[165]

There is a case recorded in the *Gazetteer of Buddhist Temples in Jinling* which manifested in detail the process how the bestowed land of Tianjie Temple started to be taxed as normal land. Tianjie Temple possessed 3721.99 *mu* of land which was bestowed by Emperor Taizu plus 3.2 *mu* governmental land which was received after year 1521. These lands were located in Gaochun county (高淳縣, a county belonged to Nanjing), and was all rented out to a peasant named Liang Wangqi (梁旺七). In 1538, edict was

[163] Wilkinson, 2000, p.236 & p.238.
[164] See footnote no.162.
[165] *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵刹志, fas. 50 "Regulations on the Rental Quota of Individual Temples" 各寺租額條例條約, p.92, "Poster of Yingtianfu on the Investigation and Exemption of the tax Quotas on Qixia Temple" 應天府查免棲霞寺雜派貼文, and p.64, "Documents of the Proposal by Qin Tongpan that the Quotas of Linggu Temple Should Not Be Increased" 秦通判議靈穀寺不宜加派牒文.

issued which require local officials to measure land and even up the distribution of taxes. With the purpose to "appropriate some land so that he can get reduced tax later", Liang Wangqi on the one hand only reported to the county official 3274.81 *mu* as the temple's bestowed land which then was registered in the county, but on the other hand he still submitted the rental of 3725.19 *mu* of land to the temple. Thus without the notice of the monks in the temple, 450.38 *mu* of the bestowed land disappeared from the local registrar. Thirty years later in 1569, Imperial Envoy Hairui (海瑞) came to Nanjing to measure and check the amount of land, ordering that "except for the land bestowed to merited subjects that can be confirmed with concrete evidence, for land one bought privately, the owner should report the fact to officials and pay the taxes. If anyone is found to disobey this command, he will be put on trial and punished." The local Executive of Gaochun county, Deng Tongzhi (鄧同知) then enacted Hairui's order in his region. And soon it was found that the amount of land Tianjie Temple reported as bestowed land this time (3725.19 *mu*) was 450.37 *mu* more than what was recorded in the local registrar compiled in 1538. Thus Deng made the decision to punish the temple by taxing all their land for four years in order to make up for the taxes they did not submit in previous years. It seems that the monastics of the temple reported this case to the Ministry of Ritual of Nanjing (南京禮部), which intervened and verified the fact that the temple did possess 3725.19 *mu* bestowed land. However, Deng Tongzhi as the local executor "was angry with the temple's appeal, and thus taxed all their bestowed land as normal land." The Ministry of Ritual of Nanjing intervened again and the case was placed at the desk of the governor of Nanjing, who then pointed a Judge surnamed Tan (譚通判) to verify and correct the

previous decision of the local executor. But again, although on the level of Nanjing government, Tan "verified and corrected" the case, when it came to the local level of Gaochun County, the judgment was not able to be carried out at all. The bestowed land was then continuously taxed as normal land, and the monastics had to accept this fact.[166]

This case shows to us during mid-Ming period, how weak the power of an upper-level government was when its decision attempted to reach the local level. The land possessed and economic privileges enjoyed by Buddhist monasteries were no longer protected. Due to the increased taxes and peasants' rejection to pay rentals in full, Tianjie Temple and Linggu Temple were said to fall into the condition that "the temple decayed and monks were impoverished", and "[there was] no ant-monk (蟻僧, a phrase comparing monks as ants for their poor condition) who did not escape away."[167] Monks claimed that "the rental the temple got is reducing day by day, and the income is only enough to submit the taxes to the government, without one grain enter the temple… monks in the temple are hungry."[168]

The case in Fujian province is more telling of the impact of local gentry upon

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[166] *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵刹志, fas. 50, "Regulations on the Rental Quota of Individual Temples" 各寺租額條例條約, pp.80-82, "Documents on Tan Tongpan's Investigation into the Fake Exemption of Gaochun County Estates"譚通判問高淳莊田原無冒免招卷; p.77, "To Consult the Provincial Ministry for the Discussions on the Taxes of Gaochun County"本部移諮府院行高淳縣議租文

[167] *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵刹志, fas. 50 "Regulations on the Rental Quota of Individual Temples" 各寺租額條例條約, p.64, "Documents of the Proposal by Qin Tongpan that the Quotas of Linggu Temple Should Not Be Increased" 秦通判議靈穀寺不宜加派牒文

[168] *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵刹志 fas. 50 "Regulations on the Rental Quota of Individual Temples" 各寺租額條例條約, p.77 "To Consult the Provincial Ministry for the Discussions on the Taxes of Gaochun County"本部移諮府院行高淳縣議租文

Buddhist monasteries. As the statistics gained by T'ien Ju-K'ang from local histories, at the beginning of sixteenth century, the landholding of Buddhist monasteries in several counties in Fujian amounted to 20% of the farmland of their area.[169] These lands were apparently coveted by local gentry in mid-Ming dynasty, especially if we take into consideration of the lack of arable farmland in Fujian Province. Depending on the actual situation, the gentry class either collaborated with monasteries to gain profits from those lands, or encroached the monastic lands.

We have discussed in the previous chapter how the Buddhist monasteries in Fujian were sometimes considered as certain protection for the local people because many different categories of taxes were exacted upon them in Song dynasty, thus the burden of local households was comparatively lowered without influencing the revenue of local government. But such virtuous circle among the local people, Buddhist monasteries and the local government no longer existed in Ming dynasty.

T'ien Ju-K'ang's article "The Decadence of Buddhist Temples in Fukien in Late Ming and Early Qing" discussed the situation of monastic lands and its relationship with local gentry class in Fujian province. In Ming dynasty, it was customary for abbots in Fujian to "mortgage their lands to powerful local gentry, who rented it out to farmers with harsh terms of rent payment to the gentry and land tax payment to the temple." The state tried to eliminate such malpractices by limiting the rentable monastic farmland under 500 *mu*. But since such policy touched the vested interests of local gentries who were benefiting from the land renting business, it encountered much obstruction. T'ien Ju-

[169] T'ien Ju-K'ang, 1990, p. 86.

K'ang gave the example in Jinjiang county, where the amount of land harbored by powerful gentry class through different tricks was as high as 148,000 *mu*, which was more than one third of the total farmland in that county. Although this problem was again and again reported to the court since the end of fifteenth century, and although the court ordered again and again to check the problem, nothing was achieved for six decades, until the time of the anti-Buddhist Emperor Shizong (明世宗, r.1521-1566 CE). This time, the state order was not to cap the renting land of monasteries, but to secularize Buddhists on a large scale and to sell all the farmland which belonged abandoned monasteries. This edict in 1530, unlike those before, could be translated as beneficial to local gentry class in the process of land selling, and was carried out with no problem. In 1541 again, in order to make up the governmental deficit, there came the imperial order to sell possessions to meet the financial need. The measures Fujian decided to take was to have the farmland of large temples sold. For example, 23,621 *mu* farmland of Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou was sold, which was 86% of their total farmland. The gentry class took this opportunity to snatch farmland into their own hand. What is more, in the 1560s, due to the military expenses against Japanese pirates, considerable surtaxes were levied upon monastic lands, which further speeded the deterioration of the monasteries there, and the land of many temples were usurped by gentry class to build villas. By the late Ming, the percentage of land held by Buddhist monasteries dropped to only around 1% to 4% of the total farmland of their county, no longer a significant number at all.[170] The decline of Buddhism since mid-Ming was widely noted by contemporary literati. But it is interesting to see that how

[170] For a more detailed discussion, see T'ien Ju-K'ang, 1990.

different writers understood this phenomenon differently. Zhang Feng (張峰, active circa 1560s), who was a major compiler of the gazetteer of Haizhou (海州, in Jiangsu Province) when he was the prefect there, made his comment at the end of the volume on temples in the gazetteer that "I see that Buddhist temples were mainly built in Song dynasty… This is due to the fact that people were better-off, goods were in richness, and the wealth was abundant, so that people competed [to build temples]. Now temples decayed; though this is not a regret [since Buddhist teachings is for foolish people], still we can see the impoverishment of people, who had no spare wealth to do it. How can we not feel pity for it?"[171] Another Confucian scholar Gui Youguang (歸有光, 1506-1571 CE) who live roughly in the same time as Zhang Feng, however, saw the decline of Buddhism from quite a positive view. He summarized that "now since the world under heaven is in peace, thus Buddhism is declining among people."[172]

But neither of these two opposite perspectives, both of which connected the prosperity and decline of Buddhism with the wellbeing of people in a simple way, is sufficient for us to understand the situation of Buddhism in Ming dynasty. The defects of such viewpoints would be more obvious if we note the revival of Buddhism in late-Ming

[171] *Longqing Haizhou zhi* 隆慶海州志 (Gazetteer of Haizhou Compiled in Longqing Period), Shanghai: Shanghai guji shudian 上海古籍書店, 1962, reprint from Tianyige 天一閣 version, vol.8, p. 305: "予觀寺院多創于宋，當時士夫喜談禪學，而愚民因之。崇信釋老以求福利為浮屠者，又能專精苦志以圖營建，蓋其時民物康富，財用饒足，故相率而為之也。今寺觀日廢，固不足惜，但以見民力之薄，不暇為此也，豈不惜哉?"

[172] *Zhenchuan xiansheng ji* 震川先生集 (Collection of Master Zhenchuan), Gui Youguang 歸有光 (1506-1571 CE), Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981, p.110. "今天下承平，而民間佛事乃益衰。"

period (1550-1644 CE), which according to the study of Wolfram Eberhard and Timothy Brook, was a time when the scale of temple-building activities was a peak in Chinese history, -the number of temples built during this time was only second to the period of tenth century.[173] As explained by Timothy Brook, this revival was due to the gentry class's donation to Buddhism, which promoted the building and rebuilding of Buddhist monasteries.[174] And he also noted in his study that such donation to Buddhism from local gentry class in late Ming was a large scale practice happened across the country.[175] According to Brook, the reason why the local gentry class got interested in donating to Buddhist monasteries in Late-Ming was because through such activities they could build their own identity and power. He argues that "monastic patronage became significant in the late Ming because it constituted a local forum for the autonomous organization of the gentry. It provided a public arena in which the gentry could convert status into power."[176]

This local gentry class, consisted of local officials and elites, thus was the more dominant force in both the decline of Buddhism in mid-Ming and its revival in late-Ming. As pointed out by Brook, since mid-Ming dynasty, "Local elites found that they had a relatively free hand to amass land"[177] and the defects of the state taxation conditions "promoted the growth of the local gentry, garnering them a substantial income…"[178] The encroachment of Buddhist properties could also be understood as one method local gentry adopted to accumulate their wealth, as we have already discussed in the case of Fujian

[173] Brook, 1993, pp.182-183.
[174] Ibid., pp.182-183
[175] Ibid., p.183.
[176] Ibid., p.320.
[177] Ibid., p.314.
[178] Ibid., p.315.

area. In the case of Nanjing, though less obvious, it is still reasonable to suppose that the social group benefited from the impoverishment of the great temples and their loss in land estates would be no other than the local elites who were usually closely associated with local officials.

Throughout Ming dynasty, the role Buddhism took in the social-economic sphere was a more passive one. The initial policy framework set by Emperor Taizu limited the autonomous economic activities of Buddhist monastics, but his policies to protect the Buddhist community through certain state-granted economic privileges were not able to be carried on by his successors. For the most part of the Ming dynasty, Buddhist monasteries had to deal with the local officials and elites who could choose and translate state policies to suit their own interests, which often diverged from that of the state. For the major part of Ming dynasty, it was the conflicts and the reciprocity between Buddhism and the gentry class that had the most impact upon the condition of Buddhist monasteries.

CONCLUSION

Through this survey on Buddhist monasteries in Chinese history, I hope two misconceptions about the relationship between monastery and economy could be dispelled. First, different from the impression, —as expressed by some media reaction against Shaolin Temple's affair—, that Buddhism should be an existence aloof from secular affairs, the study tells us that throughout history, Buddhist monasteries were closely related to economic activities in this world, and their importance in economic section has always been noted by government in different dynasties. It is easy to fall into the line that monasteries' active engagement into worldly economic affairs is a form of "declining" of Buddhism, even it is in such a commercialized society we now have. But if we have studied history more carefully, we will realize the fact that the periods we usually consider as the more golden time of Buddhism, —Tang and Song dynasty—, were in fact when Buddhists were more actively, and often successfully, participated in economic affairs. Ironically, in Ming dynasty, a period which we often associated with the "declining of Buddhism", was when the emperor tried to help protect the religion from being corrupted by the secular world through state power.

Second, although both ancient and modern scholars tend to consider the existence of Buddhism in China as an economic burden to the state and society,[179] the closer

[179] I have mentioned many examples of such opinions in the thesis. For examples of traditional Chinese scholar officials who held this view, see the discussions by Fu Yi (傅奕, 555-639CE) as recorded in *Enlarged Collection For Promoting and Clarifying [Buddhism]*, T52.2103.p0134c04-07, ("人信之角營寺塔。小寺百僧。大寺二百。以兵率之五寺強成一旅。總計諸寺。兵多六軍。侵食生民國家大患。"); Xin Tipi (辛替

examination in my thesis showed that although monasteries indeed attracted large amount of wealth from society, those economic resources were never brought away from the control of the state. The monastic wealth could easily be utilized by government through different means, either by confiscation, persecution, or more economic methods. If utilized well, the economic capability of monasteries could produce positive effects to the wellbeing of the state and society.

But even though the state definitely took the dominant role in its economic relationship with Buddhist monasteries, it had to carefully decide at when they should restrain the expansion of monastic economy and how to do so. We see the struggle in every dynasty—Buddhist monasteries' capacity of attracting large amount of resources on the one side, and the state's intention to keep monasteries in a controllable size on the other side—but different dynasties had different understanding of where the balanced point was

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否, circa 8th century), in *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書, vol.101, p.3159 ("今 天下之寺蓋無其數，一寺當陛下一宮，壯麗之甚矣！用度過之矣！ 是十分天下之財而佛有七八，陛下何有之矣！百姓何食之! ……當今出財依勢者，盡度為沙門；避役奸訛者，盡度為沙門。其所未度，惟貧窮與善人耳，將何以作範乎？將何以租賦乎？將何以力役乎？"); Peng Yan (彭偃, circa 700-800 CE) in *Jiu Tang Shu* 舊唐書, vol.127, p.3581 ("今天下僧道，不耕而食，不織而衣，廣作危言險語，以惑愚者。一僧衣食，歲計約三萬有餘，五丁所出，不能致此。舉一僧以計天下，其費可知。陛下日旰憂勤，將去人害，此而不救，奚其為政?"); and Chen Chun (陳淳, 1159-1223CE), in footnote no.107. For examples of modern scholars who adopted such view based upon the recorded discussions of ancient scholars officials, see Gernet, in footnote no.3 and footnote no.4; He Ziquan 何茲全, "Buddhist Monasteries in Early Medieval China" 中古時代之中國佛教寺院, in *Studies on Buddhist Monastic Economy from Han to Tang Dynasty in the Past Fifty Years* 五十年來漢唐佛教寺院經濟研究, p.40; Jian Xiuwei 簡修煒, Xia Yihui 夏毅輝, "Survey on the Landlord Economy of Monasteries in Southern and Northern Dynasties" 南北朝時期的寺院地主經濟初探, in *Studies on Buddhist Monastic Economy from Han to Tang Dynasty in the Past Fifty Years* 五十年來漢唐佛教寺院經濟研究, pp.295-297.

located, and this difference largely decided the form of monastic economy in each period. During periods of disunity, the states in North China allowed the rapid expansion of Buddhist monasteries with the granted tax privileges, and the size of monasteries soon reached its peak in Chinese history. The development of monasteries attenuated the economic power of local clans to some degree, and channeled large amount of wealth and manpower from society to the monastic system which was closely controlled by the state. It was then through persecution that the state regained the economic resources gathered in monasteries, which contributed to the reunion of China. In Tang dynasty, the state was groping for a more regulated way to control monastic economy. As showed by its land and tax policies, the Tang government tried to better incorporate monasteries into the state economic system by granting land to them and collecting taxes from them as common households. Such legacy was then adopted and developed by Song state, which exploited the most economic potential of Buddhist monasteries. From an economic point of view, a virtuous circle was created, which was most obvious in Fujian area: monasteries attracted land and wealth from society, government exacted heavy taxes from monasteries, and the tax burden of commoners was thus lowered. In Ming dynasty, when the early emperors attempted to control Buddhist monasteries in a more strengthened way, but the original ideal failed in front of social reality, and the growing local elites became a more dominant force affecting the economic situation of monasteries. It may not be proper to evaluate which dynasty did “better” or “worse” than others in its treatment toward Buddhist monasteries, but it is still beneficial to examine the differences of Buddhist monasteries in different dynasties, and to think about why in some cases the economic relationship

between monasteries and state could produce more positive effects to society.

There are many other important topics regarding Buddhist monastic economy which I have not had the opportunity to include in this thesis, for example, the prosperity of Inexhaustible Storehouse in the Tang dynasty; the Three Stages Movement in the Sui and Tang dynasties which had the potential to grew into an independent channel of capital flow among Buddhist monasteries; the three major persecutions of Buddhism in Chinese history which closely associated with economic problems caused by the existence of a large Buddhist community; the active loaning and pawning business of monasteries in Song dynasty… The picture of Buddhist monastic economy can be more complete if all these are put together. But in this thesis, I have to choose to center my topics around the land and tax issues.

When writing this thesis, I cannot help but continuously compare what happened in history with what is happening now in China. For example, any Buddhist temples in the mainland are now being encroached by developers, —today's elites or "gentry class" who have accumulated tremendous wealth in the past decades, who have their own vested interests and are capable of distorting the policies from the central government for their own benefits? And is it not true that the many investors who are now investing in building Buddhist temples, while making profits from tourism, are also promoting their social and cultural identity through it? I always believe that the significance of historical studies lies in the insights it can bring to us when we look at current social issues. I hope my thesis also to some degree helped to deepen our understanding of what is happening today.

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